Roma Migration

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Michael Stewart[1]

Foreword

In August 1998, just after the Schengen EU countries had promised to consider changing the visa requirements for Romanians, the satirical Romanian weekly, *Academia Caţavencu*, carried the headline: "Watch Out Swans of Europe, Here We Come!" The joke referred to an incident notorious within Romania at least when Romanian migrants (of uncertain ethnic origin, but believed to be Roma by most Romanians) had been accused of killing and roasting Viennese swans during a sojourn in the Austrian capital. In the face of the double standards, the hypocrisy, the bureaucratic nonsense and the sheer medieval thinking about migration issues in 'united Europe,' *Academia Caţavencu*'s sublime mockery may seem the only approach likely to cut through the horse shit. That is, until you receive a book like this one in your hands.

For here, at last, is some well informed, solidly researched and soberly thought through analysis of migration in its economic, social, political and human contexts.[2] Of course, the occasion of the research was the local, Hungarian hoo-haa consequent on the 'flight/ migration' of the Zámoly Roma to Strasbourg (a political storm very helpfully documented from several diverse angles by several of the contributors here). But the research project has gone far beyond the confines of a debate shaped by a paranoid political rhetoric which now, as so often in the past, seeks to lay the blame for Hungary's miseries on some bloody foreigners aided by treacherous (former?) Hungarians now living abroad. It is fashionable to accuse social science of irremediable parti pris, but in this book we have a case in which true dividends are paid by even that minimal extra degree of objectivity which derives from a 'scientific/research' discourse. For, in the face of political strategies (on all sides) that inevitably reduce and simplify social reality in order to mobilise constituencies, research such as this complicates and dissolves firm lines of demarcation. It takes no special foresight to see that because it does so, this book will be attacked from all sides in the hot house of today's Roma issue in Hungary.

There are a number of general merits to this book. First, and foremost, it demolishes the simplistic suggestion that Hungarian Roma migration is *either* merely a response to

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[1] Michael Stewart is Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, UCL, London and Recurrent Visiting Faculty CEU.

[2] This book compares wonderfully with such craven productions of the EU funded ICMPD, as *Current Roma Migration from the EU Candidate States*, (February 2001) which, apart from adopting the simplistic economic reductionist explanations of migration puts on offer such inspired ideas as the extension of a 'benefits in kind for cash benefits' (p. 35) – ideas which have now been abandoned by the very governments (e.g. the British) which initiated them.

economic immiseration here and opportunities elsewhere *or* a product of *de facto* if not *de jure* persecution. (You will forgive me if I leave aside the imaginative suggestion that it is a Jewish inspired conspiracy to undermine poor Hungary's international reputation.) This is an important issue because of the simplistic imagery which dominates much popular thinking about migration. There is an image in the western media (and not just in the popular, tabloid press) of western/northern immigration policy acting like a dam, blocking a great pent-up flow of would be migrants eager to flee from poverty to wealth. The reality, as 25 years of free movement of labour between Spain, Portugal, Greece and the northern countries of the EU has shown, is that 'even large differences in economic returns (measured by wages) are not sufficient to induce migration in most people' (Glover et al., 2001: 3). As Kováts notes in his introduction here, only 3-4% of the Hungarian population at large would consider working abroad and half that number entertain the idea of moving abroad permanently. So, if larger numbers of Roma are migrating or considering migrating from Hungary than other Hungarian citizens, this is unlikely to be due to a simple calculation of wage differentials. The sad fact is that there is a growing tendency in Hungary for Roma to feel that Hungary is less and less a desirable place to live. And in Miklósi Gábor's presentation of one woman's asylum application we can see why. 'Maria's' story of abandoning her job after pressure from the chief nurse and refusals by white Hungarians to be given injections by a 'Gypsy' rings horribly and bitterly true. Presented with an opportunity to move, the most ambitious, the most qualified and the most imaginative seem increasingly likely to make the leap into migration. Note, however, that this is not to bring on stage the journalistic image of 'Roma migration' as a general phenomenon characterising all Roma communities in Hungary. What this book offers is a rich picture of the extreme heterogeneity among Roma communities, families and individuals. As the researchers show (Kállai, especially), many of those who might be expected to take advantage of migratory possibilities do not in fact do so.

There are also numerous merits in the detail of the studies presented here. Of all these excellent contributions, I would like in particular to highlight the ethnographic essays by Hajnal, Kállai and Vajda–Prónai. Hajnal's notion of the transnational migration network which has come into being between Canada and Hungary reminds me of strategies used in earlier centuries by other peoples who found themselves marginalised as the global division of labour changed shape. Take, for instance, the 17th and 18th century peddlers from the Alps, whose heroic migrations Laurence Fontaine has rescued from archival oblivion (Fontaine, 1996). Here was a population that found itself unable to sustain itself in its mountain redoubts, and launched itself into what even then can be called a transnational migration network, linking cities as far flung as Seville, Ghent and Lyons with the home village in the mountains. The crucial point of comparison is that in a world where towns still jealously reserved the right to settle and establish fixed businesses within their walls, these alpine adventurers were able to use mobility itself as a strategy to implant themselves in various markets and circumvent feudal restrictions. Something rather similar, I suspect, is happening with the Budapest entrepreneurs Hajnal describes: not so much an emigration from Hungary and an immigration into Canada, as a migration between.

Not all Roma people are well adapted for such innovative strategies which involve an elaborate juggling and balancing of economic, legal and social possibilities. Leo Howe (1990) has shown with respect to Northern Ireland that a group's historical relationship

with the state decisively shapes strategies in communities of the long-term unemployed. Other ethnographic investigations have demonstrated that a certain healthy disrespect for 'authority' is the *sine qua non* for survival as entrepreneurs at the bottom of the social pile (Pine, 1996: 140–147, 1998: 117). And it seems that it is the Roma families who were persecuted for longest as 'nomads' and 'vagrants' (that is the so-called Vlach Gypsies) who have maintained the most 'ambitious' stance vis à vis authorities and the state, and have managed to make the most of the new world order around them (see Stewart, 1997; Day–Papataxiarchis–Stewart, 1998). In stepping onto this ladder they find, as do others in the post-socialist world, that it helps to work with a radical separation of the social world. 'Trust and morality are implicit at the local level but do not extend to the wider society. Rather, the centre is viewed almost as a field of opportunity, in which gaps can be located to pursue entrepreneurial dealings; these dealings are imbued with little or no sense of moral obligation, and there is little sense of shared identity with the centre' (Pine, 1998: 121). But if such entrepreneurial freedom in part a product of exclusion, what are the consequences of integration consequent to migration? Some of the migrating Roma seek new forms of integration in Canada, using their mobility as a means to achieve this. Can they then resist imbibing the effects of integration in a less racially conscious environment than Hungary? Alice Forbess' research in Romania is demonstrating that Romanian migrants return more able to bypass corporatist strategies[3] for economic implantation, more adapted to market procedures (Forbess, 2001). Will the Roma too benefit from mobility in this way?

Kállai's demonstration of the great variation in attitude to migration even within the relatively homogeneous professional field of musicians is demonstrated both in his general survey but also in his expertly conducted interviews, represented here by one case study. Vajda and Prónai courageously take on the presentation of data on the lowest rung of the migrant Roma, those whose (temporary) destination is Hungary itself. Here we discover a Romanian Roma family living during the summer months out of doors in a public park in Budapest while its members beg around the railway stations. They make a monthly journey to the Hungarian Romanian border where they renew their visas, but manage to avoid every paying fares on these trains through complex manoeuvres with the guards and a willingness to take an inordinately long time about their journeys. They live in the park in part in order to avoid paying for accommodation but also to get away from unpleasant encounters in the kind of hostel where lodging would be available to them. Here truly we have an image of the Roma to feed notions of a modern 'dangerous class.' Yet how wrong it would be to read the evidence in this way. All the ethnographic evidence on Roma who derive a significant income from begging (e.g. Piasere, 1985; Tauber, n.d.; Engebrigsten, 2001) suggests that such families also rely upon more 'regular' income streams and in other contexts appear as 'normal,' 'integrated' Roma. So to imagine such people in terms of outcastes or 'underclass' merely exaggerates the reality of separation and in so doing reproduces the very ideology by which the exclusion of 'the Gypsies' tends to be justified. This is all the worse in that it is the fact of their social exclusion which produces the 'problematic' behaviour in the first place.

Is this willingness to live 'unstably,' 'on the move' a quality of Roma culture? It is hard to answer this question definitively. We know it has nothing to do with the so-called

[3] The term 'corporatist' is used as Jowitt defines it in his work on post-communist societies (Jowitt, 1993).

'nomadic spirit' invoked by romantics and racists alike. But what is the role of political and social marginalisation? *A priori,* the marginalised seem less likely to feel 'at home' than the privileged. And certainly, it is hard to imagine Hajnal's friends sharing the sense of guilt, shame and occasionally criminality that is reported for Hungarian speaking migrants from Transilvania after they leave their homeland (Kovács–Melegh, 2001). And the potentially transnational community of Roma might provide a point of alternative identification. But, as Hajnal shows, for these migrant Roma the transnational network is in fact a means to sustain links to those one has left. The Hungarian Roma in Canada not only use their Hungarian links there (with a Hungarian speaking lawyer at the ready in Toronto to aid newcomers, for instance) but also, I suspect, cultivate their cultural Hungarianness. I will never forget an occasion at a festival of Roma music in London in 1999, when Hungarian Roma folk-song ensemble (who had been made internationally famous by the film *Latcho Drom*) were one of the groups invited to perform. After their session I approached them and greeted some of the singers and dancers in Roma. They were surprised and pleased to meet someone here who spoke 'their' dialect (or near enough) and we soon established common acquaintances. As we talked some Hungarian-speaking women also approached. At which one of the women I was talking to exclaimed, "Oh how good it is, to feel at home at last!" This Roma speaking woman who was participating in a festival celebrating the unity of Roma cultural forms expressed her homesickness in relation to hearing spoken Hungarian, not in relation to her dialect of Roma.[4] So, if Vlach Roma are leaving Hungary today, it is not because they have no roots there!

Finally, not the least of the merits of this book is the compilation of statistical materials on changing attitudes to Roma during the Zámoly case, the – to my mind – slightly reassuring study by Bognar and Kováts on the actual nature of press coverage of Roma issues in the wake of the Zámoly migration and court decisions, István Hell's sobering resume of the events behind this sad story and the sometimes inspiring, often hilarious but mostly saddening debates within the Hungarian parliament.

The ethnicisation of poverty and of the 'Roma issue' has been the most prominent political feature of this area of life in the past ten years in Hungary – more characteristic of Hungarian public culture than any other Central-Eastern European country (Ladányi, 2000; Emigh–Fodor–Szelényi, 2000). From the point of view of the various governmental coalitions since 1990, this very ethnicisation has been a great success story (as in the much trumpeted ethnic fora that are the minority self-goverments). Strikingly, this ethnicisation has not, however, halted the slide towards ever greater migration, as this book demonstrates. And although the book deals with Roma migration, it does so not as an ethnic but instead as a socio-economic and political phenomena, and in so doing points the way to treating these migrations as part of a great transformation in labour markets that has only just begun and which only a true liberalisation of world trade (including labour mobility) will see through to its logical conclusion. Watch out Europe! Here we come!

[4] Of course the fact that they were meeting with Roma from other countries – there were Czech and Serb Roma also participating – may have stressed the diversity of Roma lives to this woman.

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Migration Among the Roma Population in Hungary

By András Kováts

Roma migration has aroused some public interest in Hungary in the past few years. The Roma who asked for asylum in Canada occasioned the publication of first news reports and even – for the first time in Hungary – research data. The application for asylum submitted to French authorities by the Zámoly Roma a few years later was undoubtedly the momentous event which started off a wide-ranging discussion at the professional, political and social levels. Broadening into a general field of discourse on the situation of Roma in Hungary, this discussion is still being carried on in the more general terms of the problem of migration.

Although its democratic institutional framework seems consolidated enough, Hungary has been a regular item in international statistics as a source country for migration. The existence of emigrants repeatedly draws the attention of the public to the social problem which haunts the society despite the parallel process of an ever-improving market economy and a rule of law: the gradually worsening situation of the gypsies. As the time of Hungary's accession to the European Union draws nearer, it becomes ever more urgent to find a long-term solution to the problems of the gypsies. Hungary cannot join the European Union without its Roma citizens: the recognition of this simple truth is crucially important not only for political and economic institutions but also for every single Hungarian citizen.

Roma from East and Central European countries have been arriving in EU member states and Canada and the USA since the late 1990s. Most of them apply for refugee status and justify their request by referring to persecution and discrimination suffered in the countries they come from. The primary source countries in the region are Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. There is also a great number of Roma arriving in EU member states from Kosovo, fleeing from the ethnic cleansing and armed conflicts that have been raging in their region. Their case for migration is, obviously, a different one.

The Roma population of East and Central European countries has been one of the losers – if not the loser – in the fundamental social and economic changes that have occurred in these countries since 1989. They have been harder hit than any other group within the population by the problems that afflict almost everyone: progressive poverty, declining health standards and demographic indices, and the constant pressure in the educational system and on the labour market, which rather often simply makes the Roma drop out. Their chances of catching up are diminished by the discriminatory attitude of majority society. The social policies of the governments of the particular countries rarely ever contain

any plans or ideas designed to improve the situation of the Roma population, and even if they do, they stand a very poor chance of success unless there is a strong political will and support from majority society.

The fact that increasing numbers of Roma see emigration as a way to sort their problems out is not independent of their economic and social situation and the discrimination they are exposed to. Not having any special qualities to offer on the labour market, most of them see refugee status as the only chance for a residence permit in the target country and the disadvantages suffered in their country of origin become their primary 'social capital' that can be converted into some other kind of benefit. Although Roma descent, persecution and discrimination suffered is often sufficient for acceptance and the forenjoying international protection, it must not be forgotten that massive waves of immigrants asking for asylum may cause tension in particular countries, which, in turn, inevitably affects relations at the diplomatic level. Compulsory visa systems have frequently been reintroduced, temporarily or finally, against East and Central European citizens in EU member states (where the Roma are not welcome) and overseas. In countries awaiting accession to the European Union Roma migration is seen, among others, as a factor which may delay the process of enlargement, but this way of seeing the problem invariably leads to a search for scapegoats rather than to attempts to accelerate efforts aimed at an improving the situation of the Roma. People are found who can be made responsible for undermining the country's good reputation and causing possible delays in the accession process, and this makes the conflict between majority society and the Roma population even deeper. It would be extremely important, of course, to know what is really delaying the process of accession: the extremely bad social situation of the Roma and the lack of government efforts to alleviate it, or the pressure of migration weighing upon EU member states?

While we are on the topic of accession, there is also another aspect to Roma migration: the liberalisation of the labour market and the free movement of labour may give rise to a massive appearance of East and Central European Roma in EU member states seeking for jobs. The appearance of impoverished, unskilled or uneducated, cheap labour from the East may cause a great degree of tension in the lower segments of the EU labour market. Although predictions about labour migration based on research do not support this belief, it is often heard in political statements.

There has been Roma emigration from Hungary for several years, especially to Canada. The public and the political establishment showed little interest in it until July 23, 2000, the date of the departure of the Zámoly Roma who asked for refugee status in Strasbourg. Their departure and the recognition of most of them as refugees in March 2001, stirred up a storm in foreign and domestic politics. Government officials voiced serious doubts as to the justifiability of the Roma' case for leaving the country and the Strasbourg Court's case for recognising them as refugees. By contrast, Roma interest protection organisations, and intellectuals on the side of the government's opposition welcomed the decision of the French authorities, which, they said, shed light on the untenable situation of the Roma in Hungary. Although the extent to which the „French affair" has or will have an effect on Hungary's position in the enlargement talks remains to be seen, the government's reaction (criticising the French authorities, the description of the Roma as criminals and *agents provocateurs*, playing with the idea of a 'conspiracy' etc.) is certain to be of no use in getting clear about differences of opinion and finding common solutions and answers. Although premonitions

that masses of Hungarian Roma would set off for Western Europe to pursue their happiness in some EU member state have not been come true, there have been a number of Hungarian Roma groups following the Zámoly example in requesting refugee status somewhere else in Europe.

ROMA MIGRATION AS REFLECTED IN DATA

In this section I try to infer the present extent of Roma migration and make hypothetical statements about future trends on the basis of available statistical data on migration and refugees as well as calculations as to the country's migration potential.

The number of Hungarian citizens living overseas, predominantly in the United States, is estimated to be at 200.000. Of the estimated 100.000 Hungarian citizens living in Western Europe 90% live in Germany and Austria. Most of those who live abroad left the country in the decades preceding the social transformation (Juhász, 1996: 89). Despite the virtually closed Western borders before 1989, 20.000 Hungarian citizens left the country legally in the 1960s and 70s and the number of those leaving illegally is estimated to be a further 50.000.

As conditions of travelling were eased in the 1980s the number of emigrants rose to 10.000 a year, according to some estimates (Juhász, 1996: 71–72). There are no data on the proportion of Roma among these emigrants. In fact, it was a question of secondary importance whether one was a Roma or not. Those arriving from countries of the Communist bloc could reasonably count on being granted refugee status in western states and, thanks to existing informal networks, on letters of invitation, residence permits, and job opportunities (Kaminski, 1980).

Nowadays, there are 25–30.000 Hungarian citizens going abroad to work (Juhász, 1999: 89). Germany and Austria are the number one target countries for these jobbers. There are no data on those who work without permit. There are few people leaving with an intention to settle down somewhere else finally. Most of those who leave start working in temporary jobs. Although there may be a few Roma among the guest workers may include a few Romas, the underprivileged position of the Hungarian gypsies on the labour market and the social ladder is likely to assert itself in their chances of acquiring temporary jobs abroad. It is not only in Hungary that the unskilled worker who is difficult to mobilise is the employer's last choice. Temporary work done overseas or in Western Europe has no specifically Roma or non-Roma character. The chances of getting a job are predominantly shaped by demand for labour force, and being an Eastern European is more important to the Western employer than being or not being a Roma (Wizner, 2000).

A special area of temporary employment abroad for Hungarian Roma is music for entertainment . There were a great number of musician gypsies working in Western Europe in the 1970s and 80s. Although demand for them has decreased significantly, there still are a number of bands playing abroad. The young Roma who are trained in classical music are worthy of special note. Many of them work in Western European orchestras on contracts, or study in Western conservatories.[1]

[1] In migration among the musician gypsies see Kállai's paper in the present volume, pp. 75–96.

Empirical data on the migration potential of the present Hungarian population (Sik, 1999) allow us to make the following claims:

- the migration potential of the population above 15 years of age has been more or less the same throughout the 1990s. 3-4% of the population want to take on some job abroad, and a mere 1-2% of them are prepared to live abroad, too. These proportions are low in comparison with data collected in other East and Central European States (Fóti, 2000).
- typically, the number of those who plan to leave the country has a higher than average proportion of men, students and the unemployed. Further characteristics include being young, having a family of greater than average size, owning a flat of relatively great value and high qualifications.
- those who plan to find a job abroad give Germany and Austria as their target country; those who plan to emigrate tend to name the United States.
- those who plan to migrate are motivated by the expectation of better life prospects abroad rather than by their economic problems here in Hungary.
- the proportion of Roma among those wishing to emigrate is somewhat higher than among the total population: Roma accounted for 4% of the total sample and 9% of the sample of those who want to emigrate.

The idea of a stronger inclination to migrate among the Roma population is indirectly made plausible by a survey conducted in 1998. This survey examined young Hungarian women who were planning to leave the country and young women who had no such plans on their minds, and found that most of the young women who sensed ethnic conflicts around them were in the first group.[2] It must be noted, however, that there is no direct link between an inclination to migrate and actual migration. Actual migration is likely to be influenced, both in intensity and in character, by a number of further factors such as the availability or lack of convertible material or cultural goods, the demand on the labour market or the character of asylum policies in the target country. In the absence of adequate empirical data it is impossible to tell how the dynamics between potential and actual migration will turn out among the Hungarian Roma population. It would take further thorough research to answer the question.

It is often mentioned in connection with the Roma that the Roma lifestyle – characterised as it is by nomadism or temporary settlement – itself contributes to their stronger inclination to migrate (see e.g. Blaschke, 1999: 16–19; ICMPD, 2001: 9). Emigration based on traditional migration strategies and the international network is less characteristic of the Hungarian Roma population than of other East and Central European countries, due to the relatively settled lifestyle of Hungarian Roma communities.[3] At the same time, there is a transnational migration network[4] in the making between the members of families who emigrate to Canada and those who have stayed at home, which allows for greater mobility than was possible under the earlier conditions of a settled lifestyle. This new development, however, has no

[2] Their proportion is 54% as opposed to the 32% among those who have no plans to emigrate (Wallace, 2000: 80).

[3] A comparative analysis of data available at the National Statistics Office and from the National Gypsy Surveys confirms the claim that Hungarian Roma have a settled lifestyle. It even turns out that Roma migration between settlements and counties shows no significant deviation from similar data on the Hungarian population. For more detailed comments on the analyses see Janky, 1999.

[4] For more details, see Hajnal in this volume (pp. 42–68).

direct links with the nomadic lifestyle that was characteristic a few generations ago and should not be interpreted as an example of traditional nomadism.

The migration of Hungarian labour force to the present member states of the European Union is predicted to have no significant effect on the labour market of these countries. Illegal jobbing is predicted to stay at the same level in the years following the accession as it is now, and the number of those working legally in casual or seasonal jobs is expected to rise slightly. The migration of highly skilled labour to the West is a new development which is not expected to reach significant proportions (Boswell, 2000). The actual outcome will, of course, greatly depend on the demand for labour in the target countries at the time of the enlargement, the degree of the differences between incomes in acceding states and present member states and on whether or not there will be a transitional period stipulated by the EU concerning the free movement of persons (and if there is one, how long it will be and what exactly its terms will be).

The actual access of Roma to the labour markets of Western Europe and overseas countries will depend on a number of factors, which are as yet unpredictable because of a lack of research data, but can nevertheless be more or less anticipated. Much will depend on whether employment policies on the part of the government will succeed in increasing the share of Roma in the domestic labour market, whether demand for unskilled and casual labour force will increase in Western Europe and overseas, whether Roma families which have recently made their way to Western countries will be able to serve as a basis for a migration network capable of helping newcomers to get job opportunities and making it possible for them to settle down.

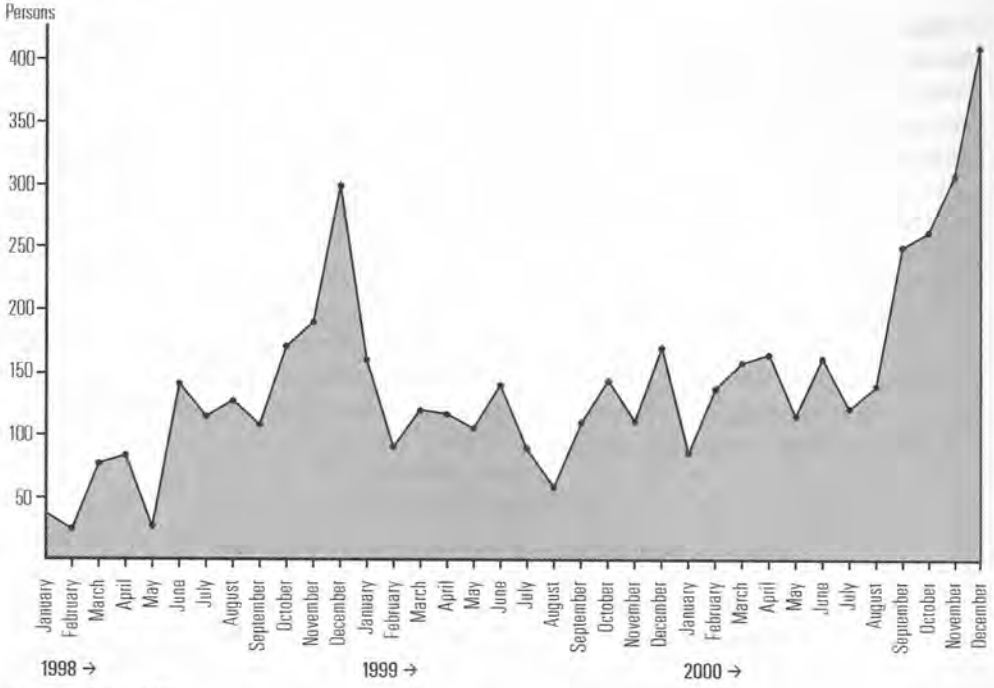
An increasing number of Hungarian citizens have asked for refugee status in Western countries, especially Canada, since the mid-1990s. Although asylum seekers are registered according to citizenship in the official refugee statistics both of receiving countries and in the data bases of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (henceforward UNHCR), asylum seekers from Hungary (and other East and Central European states) are widely known to identify themselves as Roma. Data on national or ethnic identity are not registered in Hungary, or in the neighbouring countries, so Hungarian asylum seekers professing to be of Roma descent have to produce some sort of indirect proof of their ethnic origins if it is of importance for their applications.

A few years ago Hungarian Roma civil organisations and minority self-governments started issuing what were called certificates of descent for would-be Roma emigrants, but this practice lead to a heated debate in political circles.[5] The practice has since been stopped by all organisations except the Hungarian Roma Parliament. The president of Phralipe, a gypsy organisation, who is at the same time a vice president of the National Gypsy Self-Government, summed up his opinion by saying if you are a Roma, it will strike the eye, but if you are not evidently a Roma, you should not try to become one with the help of a certificate of descent.[6]

Identifying Roma descent seems to be a less simple task if one judges from the documents used by the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board in the process of deciding

[5] For more details see the compilation of press reports by Bognár in this volume (pp. 181–196).

[6] Based on the author's interview with Béla Osztojkán.



Source: ICMPD, 2001

Figure 1

The number of Hungarian asylum-seekers in Canada between January 1998 and December 2000
(in a monthly breakdown)

on applications. This is regrettable as credibly proving one's ethnic origin is of key importance for a reasonable decision on applications for asylum.[7]

The number of Hungarian citizens applying for refugee status in Canada in the late 1990s underwent the following changes: 10 persons in 1994, 38 persons in 1995, 64 persons in 1996, 300 persons in 1997, 982 persons in 1998, 1579 persons in 1999 and 1936 persons in 2000. *Figure 1* offers the same data in a monthly breakdown. The process of growth did not slow down in the first months of 2001: there were over 80 persons going to Canada from Hungary, asking to be recognised as refugees.[8] The rise in the number of applications submitted did not lead to a similar rise in the number of refugee statuses granted: 153 applications by Hungarian citizens were found to be well-founded in 1998, and 74 in 1999. The number of refugee statuses granted rose again in 2000 to 343.

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[7] See also IRB, 1998 and 1999, Hajnal, 2000 and – in the present volume – Hajnal (pp. 42–68).

[8] Sources include Lee, 2000, data sent by IRB to the Roma Press Centre and the Budapest Office of IOM, the statistics of UNHCR on refugees and the author's personal information. There is a data base on the number of Hungarian citizens asking for refugee status in Canada and the result of their applications, which can be acquired from the Canadian Embassy under the name FOSS RUN. It is not accessible for purposes of research and the media, but it is for accessible ministries and government offices.

Data for 1999 (IRB, 2000) reveal that the number of applications for refugee status in Canada from Hungary was exceeded only by the numbers from three other countries: Sri Lanka (2915 persons), China (2436 persons) and Pakistan (2335 persons). These four countries together account for almost one third of all applicants. The citizens of the other three countries are subject to compulsory visas for Canada, so it is much more difficult for them to get in, and the number of favourable decisions on their cases is much higher than with Hungarian citizens[9]: 81,1% of Sri Lankan applicants, 24,3% of Chinese applicants and 41,2% of Pakistani applicants were granted refugee status, as opposed to 4.7% with the Hungarians. In 2000 the recognition rate of Hungarian citizens rose to 17,3%.[10]

There have been very few cases of Hungarian citizens applying for refugee status in a member state of the European Union recently. The data in *Chart 1* show the number of Hungarian citizens who have asked for refugee status in another European country since the social transformation of 1989 and their proportion among the applicants for refugee status from all East and Central European countries.

Chart 1

East and Central European asylum seekers in European states*

Year	Number of persons from Hungary	Number of persons from East and Central Europe	Percentage of Hungarians in all East and Central European asylum seekers
1990	914	94 405	0,97
1991	706	89 956	0,78
1992	1222	160 969	0,76
1993	418	119 798	0,35
1994	164	30 129	0,54
1995	77	21 094	0,37
1996	130	15 968	0,81
1997	97	17 267	0,56
1998	50	14 607	0,34
1999	101	19 062	0,53
Total	*3879*	*583 255*	*0,67*

* Included among European states are not only EU member states. For purposes of data processing Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia are treated as East-Central European states.

Source: UNHCR, 2000.

[9] Here and from now on I will depart from refugee statistics in expressing recognition rates as the ratio of positive decisions to applications submitted during the period examined. This usually comes out lower than the ratio based on the total number of decisions, but the data which are available now do not make such a more reined analysis feasible.

[10] For the causes of the change, see more in Miklósi's case study in this volume (pp. 69–74).

Officially accessible statistics do not give information about the applicants' motivations for applying for refugee status but it is very likely that in the early 1990s applicants used to refer to political persecution and grievances resulting from defects in the democratic order, while fear of persecution because of ethnic or racial identity have come to the fore in the second half of the decade. Roma not only from other East and Central European states but also from Hungary have asked for refugee status during this period. An increase in applications for asylum from the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia between 1994 and 1999 clearly testifies to the fact of massive emigration among the Roma: the number of applications submitted by Czechs grew by 50%, that of applications submitted by Poles more than doubled and that of applications submitted by Slovaks rose to seven times as many. There was no significant increase in the number of Hungarian asylum-seekers, and their proportions stayed below 1% throughout the decade. If we turn to examining the proportion of recognised refugee statuses, as the percentage of all applications, we get 1,19% for the Hungarians, which is well below the 10-15% recognition proportions of asylum seekers in European countries and, at the same time, more or less at the same level as the 1,24% of recognition[11] of applications submitted by people coming from East and Central European countries. Accepted applications are concentrated in the early years of the decade, while only one single Hungarian citizen was granted refugee status in a European state after 1994.

Hungarian citizens asking for asylum have also been registered in the United States, but their number is tiny as compared with that of those applying in Canada or Europe: there were 463 cases of applications for asylum submitted by Hungarians in the United States between 1990 and 1999. Although there are more Hungarians in the United States than in European states, they account for a mere 2,6% of the total of East and Central European asylum seekers (18 038 cases).

As is clear from the data, the number of Hungarian citizens applying for refugee status in the past three years is more or less the same as the number of citizens from other East and Central European states who have asked for refugee status abroad. In contrast to them, Hungarian asylum seekers submitted their applications mainly in Canada rather than in some member state of the European Union. The Zámoly Roma's application and their recognition as refugees in France may reverse an established trend, encouraging further Roma communities to ask for refugee status in some European country.

ROMA MIGRATION AS REFLECTED IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

After the previous survey of statistical data I will now turn to a microscopic examination of the every-day reality of Roma migration from Hungary, trying to find answers to questions such as who leave the country, for what reasons and how arrangements are made and carried out.

Roma migration from Hungary and East and Central Europe has been a recurrent subject in the Hungarian press since 1997, and the Zámoly Roma's application for asylum in France has transposed the topic to the level of political and general public discussion. Yet, in spite

[11] 7232 persons in ten years.

of all these developments, we have very fragmentary information about the real background to these events or the migrating Roma themselves. This state of affairs is due to a variety of causes.

One is the nature of the relationship between the migrants and their social environment: as the Hungarian Roma migrants are mainly present in the field of asylum it is quite natural that the country-leavers try to minimise contact with the rest of the population of the country they are about to leave. 'Escaping' and seeking 'refuge' presuppose some sort of conflict between them and majority society as well as the authorities and public administration of the country they are leaving, and this has considerable influence on the image formed of the country-leavers in their country of origin.

There is a great deal more information about the situation, the demographic composition and the motives behind the decision of the asylum seekers. However, all this is information which is treated as confidential by the authorities who conduct the asylum procedure, especially *vis-à-vis* the authorities of the country of origin.

The applications submitted by Roma from East and Central European countries has lead to a number of delicate situations for two reasons. The countries of origin were countries which had high-level diplomatic relations with the receiving country, secondly, the Roma – especially if they were coming on a massive scale – were not particularly welcome in the receiving countries. This has lead to a series of exchanges of information about the applicants between the countries of origin and the receiving countries. For instance, experts at the British Home Office relied on the co-operation of government officials designated by Vladimir Mečiar in their efforts to gather information about the situation of Roma in Slovakia, and the Canadian authorities met a delegation of Hungarian government officials to get more direct information about the situation of Roma applicants (British Refugee Council, 1999: 73; IRB, 1999).

A further difficulty arises from the circumstance that it seems impossible to get to the facts of Roma migration in the prevailing thick atmosphere of partisan political statements and comments. Those who are most directly affected seldom speak themselves. One is always offered interpretations of the events by government officials, opposition politicians as well as political and interest protection organisations of the Roma population.[12]

Massive migration has drawn attention to the extraordinarily difficult position of Roma in Hungary, or in neighbouring countries, and is causing a great deal of tension in those states which are at the threshold of accession to the European Union. At the same time, there is a new element in the Hungarian story of Roma migration: by going to Strasbourg and submitting their complaint and application, the Zámoly group have not only become active participants in the political discourse carried on about the general situations of the Roma but have also transformed it into a more inescapable topic, thereby supplying an example unprecedented in the history of the gypsy community in Hungary.[13]

What happened seems to be a reversal of previous tendencies: the emigration of the Zámoly community happened before the eyes of the general public, which includes politicians, and exploited the advantages of a combination of personal problem-solving and

[12] See the Chronology of Roma Migration in the *Appendix* of the present volume (pp. 180–194).

[13] This is clearly shown by the speeches and comments made in Parliament included in the *Appendix* of the present volume (pp. 148–179).

political protest.[14] At the same time the life of the Zámoly Roma is far from being an 'open book' to Hungarian media consumers. Despite a variety of reports, comments, press statements and efforts in investigative journalism we know very little about the actual circumstances of migration, the reasons of the migrants, or the later course of the emigrants' lives as about the hundreds of Roma who emigrated to Canada.[15] Almost nine months after their departure, the story of the Zámoly Roma is no better than a tangled web of constructions, cumulative at best, contradictory at worst. What unfolds from the co-existing and constantly rewritten narratives is the set of social-political conflicts which surround the gypsy community in Hungary rather than the real story of the smaller Zámoly community.

So far, there has been only one project of empirical research devoted to the Hungarian Roma communities' attitude to migration and their migration strategies. It was commissioned by the International Organisation for Migration, carried out by the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.[16] Although the project was rather small-scale and the researchers have had very little opportunity to engage in field work since May 2000, the resulting data allow us to offer at least an outline of migration among the Roma of Hungary.[17]

In what follows I offer an account of Roma migration on the basis of the results of this research project, with occasional references to experiences which have been gathered since the completion of the research project.

Since most Hungarian asylum-seekers abroad make reference to their Roma origin, we have chosen to examine Roma communities and groups which could be assumed to

a) be personally involved in refugee migration (i.e. they have been to Canada, or some of their relatives have been there, or any of them are planning to depart in the near future);

b) have a greater-than-average potential for migration (e.g. they work in trades which involve travelling both within the country and abroad, e.g. musicians, showmen, guest workers or their relatives);

c) occasionally use Hungary as a transit country (residents of neighbouring countries engaged in economic activity in Hungary involving migration: vendors, guest workers, beggars.

The groups belonging to one of the above categories have been described in ten case studies, having been classified in the following manner:

- those personally involved in refugee migration,
- Budapest businessmen making preparations for emigrating to Canada,
- a country community which is considering migration because of its conflicts with the non-Roma population,
- young Budapest intellectuals, most of whom have friends or relatives who have emigrated,
- those with a greater-than-average migration potential,

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[14] We can learn a great deal about the story of the Zámoly Roma from Hell's study, in the present volume (pp. 97–112).

[15] This is what emerges from the analysis of press materials (by Bognár and Kováts) and the report of the Monitor Group of the Publicity Club, both included in the present volume (pp. 113–130, and pp. 131–137, respectively).

[16] For more detail on this point see Hajnal's essay in the present volume (pp. 42–68).

[17] On the research results see also Hajnal, 2000; Kállai, 2000; Kováts, 2000 and several studies in this volume, e.g. Bognár-Kováts (pp. 113–130), Hajnal (pp. 42–68), Kállai (pp. 75–96) and Vajda-Prónai (pp. 35–41).

- guest workers and their relatives living in North- and South–West Hungary,
- professional and amateur musicians who have been travelling abroad regularly to give performances or to work in temporary jobs of varying duration,
- showmen working at fairs and wakes,
- those using Hungary as a transit country,
- group of Romanian Roma who live in Budapest but have been to Western Europe, too,
- casual jobbers from Romania who come to Hungary regularly to take on illegal jobs,
- Romanian vendors who sell their goods at markets and in the streets in Hungary,
- group of Romanian beggars active in Hungary.

The case studies were based on individual and group interviews, conversations, occasionally experiences of participating observers.

In view of the extent and the subject of the research project, it would have been inappropriate to gather data from a representative sample, in the manner of surveys, because migration affects a narrow circle which is, in addition, difficult to delimit, or to circumscribe, so it seemed more effective to approach them with the 'snowball' method, i.e. through a gradual mapping of networks of relationship. It was also expedient to prefer the interview techniques based on personal contact rather than questionnaires which are by nature impersonal and allow greater room for not so detailed responses.

One of the main results of the research has been the conclusion that Hungarian Roma cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group in terms of migration. Despite the fact that hundreds of them have been leaving the country a month for the past two years, the inclination to migrate varies greatly from group to group. The group with the greatest potential for migration is made up of Vlach gypsies who live in towns – mainly in Budapest – and whose social situation is not yet utterly hopeless but who are fighting hard merely to make a living. Musician gypsies and young Roma professionals, especially in Budapest ere the other components. An important element in migration to Canada is the friendship, kinship and business relations between emigrants. The successful emigration of the Zámoly Roma to France indicates the possibility of the emergence of a network of relationships of a different kind. The former type consists in a spontaneous system of migration organised 'from below' many elements of which have been institutionalised later, making it seem as though there had been an organised effort), while the latter has been based on active institutional participation on the part of the Roma politicians who gave their support to the Zámoly cause. It seems that application for refugee status in Europe (i.e. in an area where chances of success are slighter than for example in Canada) is the last resort of gypsy families who have to make do without the resources in connections and funds that are a prerequisite of travelling overseas. It is also the prevailing tendency at the present: from time to time Roma groups in different localities express their wish to apply for refugee status in the European Union. By doing this they may get into a better bargaining position in their attempts to find a solution to some problem they are facing in their locality (unemployment, threatening evacuation, ethnic tensions). In the months following the departure of the Zámoly Roma, the National Gypsy Self-Government tried to contact would-be emigrants and initiate a dialogue with them. It was not able to offer long-term solutions, but it did come up with a few ideas for treating the symptoms, which was undoubtedly a major step forward for those concerned. Would-be emigrants also try to win support from political forces which openly advocate emigration. This may mean access to support and material resources.

József Krasznai, the man who supported the Zámoly Roma, made several attempts to „get other Roma groups going", and he was contacted by groups several times. He negotiated with would-be emigrants in Ózd for several months, and assisted Roma in Veszprém and Mosonmagyaróvár in their efforts to emigrate to the Netherlands. However, most of these emigrants came back from the Netherlands after a few weeks.

Presumably, most of the Roma in neighbouring countries who set off for Western Europe go there for want of a better opportunity. The compulsory visa system and the strict conditions of entry make it practically impossible for them to get to Canada. Hungarian Roma usually think of overseas countries as open to refugees, places where they do not look at the colour of your skin and where you came from as opposed to Europe where xenophobia and racism, they think, is felt stronger.

Roma communities with a strong inclination for migration get most of their information from accounts given by family members, relatives and friends. Almost everyone knows someone who has been to Canada (possibly the United States) or is presently living there. The better-off among the gypsies have been to other European countries, some of them even to Canada and the United States themselves. It can be generally maintained that Roma who plan to leave Hungary have up-to-date and relevant information about emigration opportunities and ways of getting refugee status.

The institutions and regulations of immigration and refugee affairs are rather complex. The Roma do not rely on official information given by governments or civil organisations. Even if they know about them and about press reports, they think such sources are misleading, manipulated and unreliable.

They rely, instead, on their practical everyday knowledge of the working mechanisms of immigration and refugee matters which can be acquired from experience passed on personally by those who have been through the process.[18] This helps them compile, edit and submit a refugee application which is likely to succeed, and helps them also to integrate into everyday life without major hitches.

EMIGRATION TO CANADA

Groups of emigrants setting off for Canada usually consist of the family as narrowly understood, i.e. young parents and their children. Usually, the idea is that the grandparents will follow them when the younger ones have already settled into a somewhat convenient pattern of life. Often the fathers and possibly the eldest son of better-off families make a 'pilot trip' to find out a few things about the place and the circumstances.

This is a considerable burden for the family budget, so only a few can afford to undertake it. Before departure, all members of families of all walks of life invariably try to find out as much as possible about what exactly the opportunities are and what exactly has to be done.

The first thing to do is to mobilise material resources, i.e. get the funds required to cover travel expenses and the costs of living for the first few months of their stay in the new place. There are many who can afford travel expenses only if they sell their personal

[18] See Hajnal (pp. 42–68), and Miklósi (pp. 69–74) in this volume.

movables, sometimes even their flat or house.[19] If they are expelled later, they find themselves in an especially difficult situation. There being no organised support scheme for people in such situations, they may end up in the street or in the facilities for the homeless unless they can find relatives or friends who can afford to give them accommodation. Even this first and most vital step is impossible to make for many. Several Roma families do not have enough money to buy the air tickets. As the number of Roma emigrating to Canada rises, however, there is a migration network emerging, which is able to contain to a considerable extent the risks of newcomers to the system. Most recently, there have even been cases in which those already living in Canada raised and gave the would-be asylum-seekers credit worth the air fare and other travel expenses. Thus it is possible today, though not necessarily as a rule, to undertake the journey on funds other than one's own. Needless to say, the would-be asylum-seeker's credit-worthiness depends on a variety of factors such as the extent to which he or she has a well-prepared application, which influences the length of the time he or she is likely to spend in Canada, or the strength and reliability of the (familial or business) arrangements for support. At the same time, the availability of funds for the travel expenses does not necessarily motivate Roma to emigrate. Several of the well-to-do businessmen asked in the course of our work had been entertaining ideas of emigration for years without ever taking concrete steps toward it. The poorer the person's or family's conditions are, the more important the lack of funds will be as a hindrance. Where there are no resources to mobilise, interviewees almost invariably refer to the lack of money as an explanation for why they have not yet emigrated. Where financial obstacles can be at least removed, the causes and reasons become more complicated.

The next thing to do is to get the documents which will serve as proof of the case for being a refugee and to acquire the knowledge that will convince the immigration authorities. All Roma who entertain the idea of emigration think that the ability to present credible proof of one's personally experienced persecution on account of his or her Roma descent or at least to talk about the persecution of Roma in Hungary in general is an absolute precondition of being granted refugee status (and with it of a residence permit). It is common knowledge that documents (police records, medical records, possibly copies of newspaper reports) are of practical value, so if one has them one had better collect them and present

[19] In East and Central European countries, especially Slovakia, there have been heated debates about the idea of social aid schemes for citizens whose applications for refugee status abroad have been rejected. With support from the European Union, IOM launched a return aid provision scheme for Czech, Slovakian and Romanian applicants for refugee status who had been expelled from Belgium, Netherlands and Finland. The same organisation has been operating similar schemes in various parts of the world, with varying degrees of success. The discussion grew into a heated debate when it came to defining the nature and extent of the support envisaged: it was argued that schemes designed to aid social integration should be accorded to families who left their homes because, like those members of their communities who stayed at home, they had had difficulties in finding their place in the local society. This proposal was countered by the argument that an arrangement targeted only at those families might confer a benefit on a group whose situation was in no way better than that of those who never left their homes. If access to resources were made dependent on the mere fact of someone's returning home after an unsuccessful application for refugee status abroad, this might lead to an increased readiness to migrate, a result which would run counter to the aims with which these schemes were originally conceived. Arguably, the real solution would be to improve the circumstances of the Roma population on the short term and to secure such better circumstances on the long term, but the countries concerned lack both the adequate resources and the political readiness which are required to bring these changes about.

them to the Canadian authorities when the application is handed in. It is rumoured that documents proving persecution can be bought at steep prices. Some people are convinced that it is sufficient to prove Roma descent before the Canadian authorities, although everyone agrees on the point that there has been an increasing demand for more and more 'evidence' recently. They 'have been told' that it used to be sufficient (two years ago or so) to claim one was Roma: one did not even have to speak the language; later recognition as a Roma was made conditional upon one's mastery of the language or at least familiarity with Roma culture. All that is insufficient today. It is theoretically impossible to acquire the documents and certificates as Hungarian authorities do not register Roma descent. This fact was one of the points at stake in the debate about the 'certificates of descent' issued by Roma civil organisations and some minority self-governments.

The third thing to do is *to mobilise the potential of a network of relationships in order to secure the journey and one's stay in the new place.* One can receive help from others with the sale of one's movables or real property, with the acquisition of documents, visas and air tickets. It is important to be able to prove credibly that the conditions for entry obtain. Without a visa, all the Canadian authorities are in the position to examine is whether the immigrant is able to cover the expenses of his or her stay in the country during the time of his or her stay. This can be proved by showing a certain amount of currency in cash – it is rumoured that credit cards are not accepted as an equivalent to cash – or an appropriate letter of invitation from relatives. Since the Canadian authorities are entitled to sanction airlines which take into the country people who are not entitled to stay there, airlines try to 'filter out' suspicious air travellers.[20] This is a new area of discrimination against the Roma. Prevailing practices are being criticised especially by legal defence organisations (ERRC, 2000: 4). The next important stage is the appearance before the immigration service at the airport where the application for refugee status has to be submitted. Advocacy organisations in Canada actively assist asylum seekers: besides offering advocacy and social advice, they lobby publicly for the adoption of Hungarian Roma asylum seekers. Civil organisations are also beginning to be established by Roma emigrants from Hungary who try offering an advisory service and issuing newsletters, but what is more important than their actual efficacy is their symbolic function: their decision to assume a political role is a sign of the social integration and legitimisation of Roma who emigrate from Hungary.

The social and economic situation of interviewees was found to have a formative influence on their opinion of the causes of migration. The well-to-do mentioned primarily economic reasons: they are attracted by business opportunities, a more favourable taxation system, and the low prices of basic commodities. They evaluate the target country in terms of opportunities for doing business and living. Although all of them clearly see the discrimination against the Roma here in Hungary, they are not seriously affected by it, as a result of their influence and social position.

Although many of the well-off Roma who live from some business enterprise had at some time considered the idea of emigration, very few of them decided to leave the country. This is explained by the lack of foreign language skills, the difficulties involved in build-

[20] This is why Hungarian Roma tend to choose the direct Budapest–Toronto flight. In their experience there is a danger at European airports that 'suspected refugees' will be sent back.

ing up a network of relationships that is necessary for the running of a successful business, and the fear of insecurity.

To the underprivileged Roma families who are fighting the various inconveniences of social disadvantage Canada seems to be the land of great opportunities. Interestingly, the discrimination weighing on Roma in their home country is not the decisive attraction about emigration for them, either, although many think that it is the root of their impossible economic situation. To most in this stratum of the Roma population it is much more difficult to make the travel arrangements and raise the necessary funds. In fact, it remains a mere desire to many.

Those affected by emigration tend to identify the economic situation of the Roma as the main cause of emigration, although they add that the Roma have ended up in this position of disadvantage as a result of discrimination. They speak of a permanent sense of being threatened and socially excluded as reasons for emigration. Several interviewees have reported the experience of being dismissed from jobs or not finding a job because of their Roma descent. Many are seriously considering emigration because of some conflict with authorities or particular persons (e.g. creditors, business partners). They try to present a 'more persuasive' case or present their actual grievances as resulting from ethnic motives.

Because of the above-mentioned risks and the increasingly rigorous refugee status determination procedures in Canada many Hungarian Roma have adopted strategies which are based on the knowledge that they will have to return in a year or two. For instance, one or two persons go there, instead of the whole family, they stay with friends or relatives there, and save up as much of the social benefits or income they receive there as they can. This kind of jobbing abroad is not very wide-spread among Hungarian Roma emigrants. Since there is always at least some chance of being granted refugee status, the migrants concentrate primarily on that goal.[21]

JOURNEYS TO OTHER PLACES

As part of the research project we conducted in the spring of 2000, we asked those whose jobs involve travelling and those who have worked abroad, assuming that since these people had a much more mobile lifestyle than those who found their living where they lived or nearby, there would be a greater than average number among them of persons who left the country for good. We chose the following three typical groups: (1) guest workers and their relatives resident in the North- and South–West of Hungary, (2) professional and amateur musicians who travel abroad regularly, (3) showmen at fairs and stallkeepers at wakes, whose job involves regular travelling around the country. Our assumption as to a stronger inclination to emigrate was confirmed only about the group of musicians.

[21] Slovakian Roma find the social transfers to which they are entitled in the course of the asylum procedure are a greater attraction. Authorities in Belgium and Finland found that most migrants regarded their application for refugee status as a money-making activity, in the knowledge that their application would be rejected. The countries affected responded by shortening the asylum procedure and narrowing down the range of support benefits. This has the drawback of becoming a disadvantage to other refugees from other countries, or of becoming another instrument of discrimination against the Roma.

In the other two groups, the economic strategy of regular migration does not result in greater readiness to leave the country finally. In fact, it seems to exclude it. The stall-keepers have to be constantly present on an extremely exclusive and regulated, traditional domestic market. This makes it both unnecessary and too risky to take a job abroad. The economic strategy characteristic of guest workers relies on an exploitation of the economic differences between their place of residence and their place of work. The idea is exactly that the income is spent in the place of residence where retail prices are much lower than in the place of work.

The stall-keepers are an exclusive and closed community. They live in forty or so minor communities loosely connected with each other living mainly in places in the South–West. From spring to autumn, they travel around the country selling their goods from stalls or working as showmen at fairs. Areas of activity (i.e. who goes to which wake) are strictly distributed among the communities. Social relationships are strictly regulated and economic activity is controlled by cultural ties, which are very strong,. They attend wakes in a strictly set order based on previous agreements, which offers them enough business and has – so far – secured sufficient income for them. High overheads, the better equipment of West European stall-keepers and showmen and the similarly closed market there prevent them from undertaking any business activity abroad. In the early 1990s stall keepers and showmen from Western Europe appeared on the Hungarian market and became a formidable competition to the Hungarians because of their better equipment and better standards of service. It took the Hungarians considerable lobbying effort to drive them from the market. Despite this successful defensive campaign, the appearance of domestic competition has recently undermined the traditional monopoly of Roma in this area of economic activity. The trade of vendors and showmen at wakes is no longer the lucrative activity that it used to be in the 1970s and 80s. The members of this community rarely travel to Western Europe, and even if they do, they go there for the specific purpose of buying something they need. Their identity is closely bound up with their trade: although they consider themselves gypsies, they do not feel involved in the problems of gypsies in general.

Roma guest workers have the same lifestyle and migration strategy as non-Roma Hungarian guest workers. In order to work in Western Europe (predominantly in Germany), one has to have some qualifications. Our interviewees told us that the best one could hope for without qualifications was an illegal job. Most guest workers in Hungary follow a perfectly systematic strategy, keeping in contact with employment agencies and going abroad on contracts to work in previously negotiated, exactly specified jobs on exactly specified terms. There is general agreement among them on the point that illegal employment is not worth the effort: besides being risky because of the check-ups by strictly rule-following labour administration officials and the certainty of expulsion if the illegal employment is discovered, it also involves a position of complete defencelessness *vis-à-vis* the employer. As far as legal employment abroad is concerned, our interviewees told us that jobbers usually leave for an initial period of one to three months (and employers usually contract them for such a 'test' period) and whether they stay on is decided, on both sides, when this term of probation has been spent. This does not always depend on the employer's decision as jobbers sometimes want to work for a few months only to fill some specific financial gap (e.g. paying off one's mortgage debt, to buy a new car, or some more substantial investment)

and they sometimes even find a guest workers' life too hard to bear. All jobbers report that guest workers have to work very hard, they are exploited to the last drop of their energy and their social status is very low. Also, their accommodation leaves much to be desired. They are usually put up in workers' hostels and containers sharing rooms with other guest workers (mainly from Eastern Europe). They could afford better accommodation, of course, but their main aim while working as guest workers is to maximise earnings and to minimise expenses. Most jobbers regard the time spent as a guest workers as a transitional period, usually of a few years, sacrificed for a specific goal under better conditions of remuneration (wages which are often ten times as high as in Hungary) which usually include the establishment of a stable living in Hungary, or major family investments such as construction, purchase of a car or furniture, the launching of a business etc. A few of them get used to the higher level of consumption they enjoyed on the income earned as a guest workers and when they can no longer enjoy it at home, they will return for another job, postponing their final return for an indefinite period of time.

Guest workers working in European countries usually go home several times a year (certainly for major holidays). The idea of getting refugee status is entirely alien to their thinking because a relationship of legal employment can be instrumental in acquiring a residence permit.

We found that the Roma guest workers and their relatives we interviewed had a rather contradictory experience of their Roma identity: on the one hand, their aim in jobbing abroad was undoubtedly to 'rise above' the gypsy community, which they see as backward and disadvantaged. Even if they had succeeded in rising, they continued to regard themselves as Roma, on the other hand, who were not received into majority society whatever they might do.

Our assumption that those with a greater migration potential on account of the nature of their economic activity was confirmed only by the group of musicians. The Roma who earn their living as musicians are divided into three sharply distinct groups, and all three are characterised by a high degree of readiness for migration. At the same time, the reasons are rather various.[22]

What we treated as the first group of musicians is made up of Hungarian-speaking young gypsies, usually trained in higher education, whose ancestors played gypsy music for several generations. These young gypsies, by contrast, are trained in and play classical music. With work permits and a well-paid job, they usually have little difficulty in getting the immigration permit as well. (Several of them have recently applied for refugee status also.)

Musicians playing classical gypsy music and active in the entertainment and catering trades are the second group. The decline in domestic demand for gypsy music had some effect on their readiness to find employment abroad, but these musicians only left for brief periods. Having once belonged to the economic elite in Hungary, they did not find emigration an attractive prospect. Since 1989, however, many of them have decided to make the move. They account for a significant part of recent Roma migration, and there are many musicians among those who have recently sought asylum in Canada.

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[22] For more detail on the three groups among the musicians see Kállai's study, in the present volume (pp. 75–96).

The third group consists of young Vlach gypsies who play traditional gypsy music in bands, whose proliferation is a recent development. They give a great number of concerts on tours abroad. As with the other two groups, the motivation behind their readiness to migrate is predominantly economic in nature, they are also characterised by a strong sense of identification with Roma in general as victims of discrimination.

HUNGARY AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY

Our research project also included interviews with Roma from outside Hungary (in our case Romania) who come to Hungary regularly to engage in economic activities. Their migration strategy is similar in many respects to that of Hungarian guest workers going to Western Europe except that in their case unregulated and often illegal migration was 'the norm'.

They arrive, almost without exception, with valid passports and find employment in the informal sector of the economy. One group among them engage in well-organised and lucrative commercial activity. Another group engage in casual physical work (predominantly unskilled jobs in the construction branch). The third group consists of persons who try trading and operate at a low level of success for lack of capital and organisation. The fourth group engage in begging.[23] Except for those in the first group, their situation is one of vulnerability and defencelessness.

The first group of Roma speak Romany as their mother tongue but they also speak good Hungarian and Romanian. They engage in commercial activities not only in Hungary but also in Romania. Their commercial activity is bi-directional: by monitoring market conditions systematically, they try to make the best possible profit on goods bought in Romania and sold in Hungary, and vica versa. They usually sell their goods at markets or by peddling. Another characteristic of their activity is the participation of three generations of the family, with only the eldest generation staying behind in Romania. For them, across-the-border migration is part of an economic activity which has a long tradition going back to several generations, whose direction and intensity is regulated by the extent of foreseeable profit. Although they try to maintain good contacts with non-Roma both in Romania and in Hungary, their community is rather closed and traditional, on the whole. Our interviewees from these communities said they would not mind going to Western Europe, but only on business. What prevents them from doing this is mainly the compulsory visa system and the lack of contacts in the West (although several among them have relatives living in the West). At the same time, they think they will get the visas and make the contacts as soon as the economic prospects make it seem worth their while. Despite their high degree of mobility – or perhaps because of it – they entertain no plans to emigrate. They think their traditional lifestyle can only be maintained within their present framework and they wish to continue living in Romania despite all the difficulties that go with it.

Unlike the first group, the mostly Hungarian-speaking Romanian gypsies who try working as guest workers or trading have less success in exploiting the economic differ-

[23] A case study in the present volume, by Vajda and Prónai, gives a detailed account of the activity of Romanian Roma trading, working and begging in Hungary (pp. 35–41).

ences between the two countries. The main cause of this is the a difference in their situation, namely that they are driven by poor living conditions at home to adopt a strategy of economic migration rather than engage in it as a traditional trade. Lacking both easily convertible knowledge and contacts and funds to help trade off the ground, they can only join the least advantageous segment of the Hungarian labour market. This is, no doubt, better for them than their opportunities at home, yet they tend to be dissatisfied with their economic situation and their opportunities here in Hungary. Most of our interviewees supported themselves and their families in Romania from odd jobs involving physical work, others from vending. Physical work is usually done by men between 18 and 40. The job being illegal, the jobbers are at the mercy of mediators and employers, who often take advantage of the situation by charging exorbitant mediation fees or rents, or not paying wages. These jobbers know very little about migration and employment opportunities. They tend to set out boldly without previous information, trusting that good luck will see them through to success. They have no contact with Hungarian society other than the work relationship. In addition, they are seen as competition by Hungarian workers and other guest workers. Many of them mentioned the need for information services both in the source and in the target country which would provide them with reliable information about conditions of staying, working and finding accommodation. This would provide them with a certain degree of protection, they said.

In the group of Romanian Roma who live from commercial activities and business enterprises the 'classic' position of the guest workers is somewhat modified. Many of them have left Romania for good and migrate from Hungary to Romania rather than conversely, although contacts with family members are kept up. Some of the family members also come to Hungary regularly, and spend times of varying length here. Many of them are considering the idea of settling finally, of „bringing over" their family members, but the chances of this are rather slight owing to their financial situation. Some of them have spent a few years in Western Europe. They have a considerable network of relationships. Many of them offer accommodation to migrants from Romania to Hungary, while those who have been to Western Europe keep in contact with Roma in the West, most of whom are themselves migrants. The inclination to migrate seems to be stronger in this group than in any of the others. Both Hungary and Western Europe are considered as possible final places of residence. Their position of limited economic freedom deprives them almost completely of the possibility of making plans and devising elaborated strategies. Although an economic migrant, one of them has applied for refugee status in Hungary. Another has been actually granted refugee status here.

The Roma living from begging in Hungary set off for this country because they could not make their living in their original area. The greatest 'investment' for them is the journey itself. Not having enough money for the fare, they can only travel illegally, by bribing railway officers and authorities, with frequent interruptions and detours, which is especially demanding for the children. Only the eldest of the family stay behind. Begging is a typically seasonal activity, restricted to the time between spring and autumn. The families return to their homes for the winter and try to stretch their reserves until the next spring. Our interviewees in this group lived in abject poverty in Romania, living in a village with 30-40 other Roma families, themselves beggars. In the case of these creatures, the driving force behind migration is the struggle for sheer survival. Economic success means a tolerable

satisfaction of everyday biological needs (food, clothes, sleep). Particular families operate independently. Their relations are characterised by competition for areas or, at best, by indifferent coexistence. Their network of relationships is very narrow: they regard non-gypsy society as a resource to be exploited. They keep contact with other Roma in their own village only, and their effective network does not extend beyond the confines of their families. The flow of information concerning travelling and begging opportunities is also confined within the family. They occasionally get into contact with non-Roma 'middlemen' who offer them good opportunities abroad and are willing to help them with travel arrangements in exchange for a certain sum of money. The beggars who are active in Hungary may find accommodation in rented rooms, which they share with others so as to reduce expenses, but many of them, including our interviewees, prefer to sleep in ad hoc shelters in parks and the streets to reduce expenses and to avoid conflicts. The actual activity of begging takes place according to a strict plan and timetable. Everyone in the group has his or her tasks: men search out and control the places, and the women beg. Beggars have no intention of settling down in a foreign country, feeling that non-Roma society in Romania has less of an exclusionary attitude toward them than in other countries, so they have no wish to live anywhere else. Major considerations in choosing target countries are opportunities for immigration and the size of foreseeable incomes. The group we examined had originally headed for Poland, but they were not let in by the authorities. Few of them ever make it to Western Europe because of the compulsory visa system and the great distance. Our interviewees had not the faintest idea of the situation of Roma in Western Europe.

SUMMARY

As may be obvious from the above discussion, the migration of Hungarian Roma is a politically very delicate issue: every single piece of information, when expressed in speech, acquires evaluative overtones and automatically counts as a political statement of where the speaker is standing. This explains how it can be that actors in the political sphere have different interpretations of the figures, diverging opinion of successes, failures and the strength and legitimacy of the Roma's reasons for emigrating, and hold different views on the actual course of the lives of actual and would-be emigrants.

Hungary's position in terms of Roma migration is not the least bit better or worse than that of its neighbour counties. Despite the efforts of government organs, the number of Roma who have left or are going to leave the country is rising steeply.

The motives of Roma who leave the country are a complex matter. The simplifying accounts offered by the different brands of political discourse are not borne out by the facts. Social schemes based on any of these premises are unlikely ever to be effective.

Spectacular short-term changes can be expected only from dramatic modifications in the immigration and refugee procedures of target countries. Even if this should happen, it is to be expected that the informal 'system' of migration will absorb the shock, adapt to the changed circumstances within a relatively short time or find other target countries or other methods of entry.

The results of the research confirm the experience that Hungarian Roma are a heterogeneous group divided by considerable differences in culture, economic conditions, lan-

guage and place of residence. It is, indeed, misleading to speak of Roma migration and Roma refugees with the inevitable implication that the entire Roma population of the country is involved. Although there is migration, to be sure, and migration as a problem ought not to be played down, the results of our research point to the conclusion that it is a strategy of a narrow group only.

This claim can be supported by the following observations:

- only few have the resources to finance the undertaking of leaving the country finally, or for a long time;
- useful information about emigration opportunities is difficult to acquire; such information is passed on almost exclusively through informal channels of the personal network;
- despite frequent conflicts, Hungarian Roma are deeply embedded in local communities: leaving a place and moving to another, even within the country, is not a problem-solving strategy favoured by Roma. This is explained by the lack of resources and the rejection, whether solidly founded on experience or supposed, by the receiving social milieus, rather than by the low inclination to migrate.

Although the primary causes of emigration are economic, it must be borne in mind that the financial situation of Hungarian Roma is most closely related to the exclusionary attitude of majority society and its institutions. There may be serious personal grievances behind an application for refugee status, which ought to be examined thoroughly by the authorities of receiving countries.

Our interviewees made no clear distinction between 'emigrating' and 'fleeing', which indicates that refugee status tends to be regarded as a means to the end of acquiring the entitlement to stay in a foreign country.

All our interviewees acquired information about emigration and travelling opportunities as well as about the situation prevailing in foreign countries through personal relationships. This implies that they attribute – at best – a secondary role to the media. There is a widespread mistrustful attitude toward information provided by government and civil organisations as well as Roma political organisations. With only a few exceptions, our interviewees had a positive idea of emigration, and of the situation and opportunities of those who had already emigrated.

The strongest migration potential was found among Vlach gypsy communities with modest but not hopeless living standards and life prospects on the one hand, and young musicians, on the other. Neither well-to-do businessmen, who make careful preparations before leaving, nor musicians or skilled workers going abroad to work in exactly specified jobs (the latter never intend to settle down) present an imposition upon the labour market and social security system of receiving countries. Those who present a serious challenge to receiving counties (and later to their countries of origin) are the emigrants who 'put all their eggs in one basket' and, if they are expelled, end up where they had started out from, only in a much worse social and economic position. It was with these emigrants that the strategy of 'fishing for benefits' has been observed, i.e. the attitude of shaping one's migration strategies according to the social transfers, regarded as the sole resource.

As far as groups of Romanian Roma staying in Hungary are concerned, none of them showed any significant degree of readiness to migrate and we found little indication of transmigration among them.

There are lively debates among experts in East and Central Europe about social support schemes for people who have been expelled after an unsuccessful application for refugee status, especially in Slovakia. Supported by the European Union, IOM launched a return support scheme for Czech, Romanian and Slovakian asylum-seekers expelled from Belgium, Netherlands an Finland. Similar schemes are being operated by this organisation in other places of the world, more or less successfully. The debate arose about the nature and the extent quantity of the support. Schemes to support social integration should be provided for families whose integration was already problematic before they left, like it was for those of them who stayed behind. In this way, narrowly targeted schemes could bring a group into a beneficial position whose social situation in no way differs from that of those who did not leave their home. If, by contrast, access to resources is made conditional upon returning home from Western states, it is to be feared that the inclination to migrate will grow as a result of the prospect of acquiring an entitlement to the benefit, which is the exact opposite of what the planners intend to achieve. The solution would seem to consist in a long-term and lasting improvement of the situation of the Roma, and thus the prevention of migration.

The resources and the political will which are necessary for the implementation of such a solution are lacking in the states affected by the problem.

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Romanian Roma in Hungary: Beggars, Vendors, Workers[1]

A Case Study

By Imre Vajda and Csaba Prónai

As part of a research project conducted in the spring of 2000 under the guidance of the Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies and the Minority Research Workshop of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences[2] we interviewed four groups of Roma migrating from Romania to Hungary. Here we try to offer at least the sketch of a fuller account of four groups: the beggars, the trading „Gábor gypsies", the mostly Romanian-speaking Roma workers, and the trading „Hungarian gypsies".

In the conversations we had with our interviewees we tried to find an answer to the following questions: what makes these people migrate; what is their economic situation and their family background; how, and from whom, do they get their information; which group of gypsies do they belong to; what is their opinion of Hungary; do they come here to settle down or for some temporary purpose; where and under what conditions do they stay in Hungary; do they regard their migration as successful?

BEGGARS

The beggar family we examined belongs to the tribe which is called 'drizár' in the classification used in Hungary. Their traditional trade was wiring and tinkering. The members of the group spoke only Romanian and Romany (we talked to them in Romany).

The family came to Hungary from Hunyad county, Romania, where they live in a gypsy community of 20-30 families on a gypsy estate situated next to a river. Those speaking the gypsy language live on one side of the river, those who do not speak the gypsy language on the other side.

The economic situation of the two groups is rather similar. They live in poor huts (built from adobe bricks and without any modern conveniences), which regularly get wet or get a leak after heavy rain, and are exposed to the danger of being washed away if the river floods.

Communication between the two groups is rather sparse and reserved. Their separation was obvious during their stay in Hungary. The group was 'based' in a park outside a railway

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[1] An abbreviated version of this case study was published in the 2000/10 issue of *Mozgó Világ* (pp.101–104.)

[2] *Editor's note*: This establishment is now called 'Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Minority Research – Centre for International Migration and Refugee Studies'.

station in Budapest, a kind of island in the middle of busy motor roads, where they slept, had their meals, relaxed, washed their clothes and dried them spread across the lawn. They could leave the park in any direction, if need be. They had been attacked twice since their last arrival here. They described their aggressors as 'commandos'. The attackers beat the men, kicked the women and shouted that they should go back to Romania. The gypsies ran to the railway station for temporary shelter.

When asked why they do not rent a room or a flat, they said: „Even if we had money for that, we would be crammed in with people who do not speak the gypsy language, or with Romanians." (i.e., non-gypsies). They think they would be exposed to constant quarrels. They are also afraid of other groups because they think they are thieves.

At the time the interview was being conducted, there were two other groups in the park additional to the group of three families we were interviewing. Their sharp separation was evident. The families we were interviewing said they (i.e. those who speak Romanian as well as the gypsy language) 'lived' at one edge of the park, while the other edge of the park 'housed' two larger families of gypsies who spoke only Romanian. The third group in the park was made up of 'Romanian Romanians'.

All members of our group were illiterate. At home, they make their living by begging as well as collecting and selling cardboard paper and aluminium plates. Before the social transformation of 1989 their situation in Romania was not as vulnerable as it is now. The men used to work in factories as unskilled hands, and made some additional money by engaging in traditional gypsy trades (such as sharpening, tinkering and tin-plating. Today not only is unemployment wide-spread but traditional trades are also disappearing because of the decline of the demand for those products.

What drives them to come to Hungary is economic necessity. They use up the money they make for their every-day needs while they are here. There is nothing to take back home. They have to migrate because the 'begging markets' are full up at home during the summer.

The begging Roma come to Hungary with their entire families. Only the eldest stay behind. Migrant beggars are normally between 16 and 45 years of age. Those above 45 rarely take the journey across the border. They find it tiring and riddled with various difficulties.

They think migrating to several countries is very tiring and demanding especially for the children. In addition, they are exposed to a variety of atrocities on the train both from gypsies and non-gypsies (for instance passengers do not sit next to them; they have to travel on the gangway etc.).

Their journey to Hungary involved a lot of trouble. They first wanted to go to Poland, but they were not given permission to enter the country so they changed their plans and came to Hungary.

The group had no 'capital' either in money or contacts to rely on. The money they make by begging is enough only to secure a day-to-day living.

How were they able to get to Hungary in the first place?

They always travel by train. Their 'technique' of travelling is based, first and foremost, on the fact that they do not have enough money for the tickets, and involves bribing the conductor with the money they do have. An agreement is struck between them and the conductor, according to which the gypsies get off when ticket controllers board the train. They then wait till the next rain comes and everything starts anew (bargaining with the

conductor etc.). As none of them speaks Hungarian, they have to rely on the help of a Hungarian-speaking gypsy from Romania.

There is a non-gypsy Romanian woman travelling with the group. She has been driven away by her husband and these people allowed her to join them. They have thrown in their lot with each other. Speaking only Romanian, the woman hopes she will bump into someone who will take her to Italy.

Romanian begging gypsies come with visas which allow them to stay for a month only. They come with tourist passports with one-month visas, then return to Romania to get another visa for a month and come back again. They shuttle from spring to autumn. When it gets cold their 'accommodation' becomes too inconvenient to bear.

Actual begging is the task of women. One particular woman with one particular child begs in a place for three hours, then another woman with another child takes over. They may not leave the place which has been chosen. The begging spots they typically choose are outside churches, at markets, around hotels and coach stations. When they are 'off duty', they usually beg while walking in the street. During their three hours of 'duty' they make a maximum of 500 HUF. They sometimes get food or clothing in addition to, or instead of, money. Women always give their earnings to their husbands.

The begging gypsies also shared with us their opinion of Hungarians. They think there is a small part of Hungarian society which is ready to help the poor and the downtrodden, but the majority look down with disdain on a beggar sitting on the ground with a child on her arm who 'mooches for alms'. By contrast, Hungarian gypsies are helpful. Although the beggars' group had no genuine contacts with them, they said Hungarian gypsies were always ready to reach out a helping hand, giving them money or food.

In fact, we have seen this with our own eyes. During a preliminary conversation that we had with a gypsy women, a middle-aged Hungarian gypsy man with his wife and child turned up, gave the women 100 HUF and asked her in Romany whether we were harassing her. She said we had just helped her, too. The gypsy man looked at us with an air of disbelief, and it was not until we told him in Romany about our relationship with the beggar woman that he seemed really reassured.

Romanian begging gypsies have no wish to settle down in Hungary despite the fact that they live in abject poverty in Romania. One of the reasons they gave for this disinclination was the fact that the non-Roma population in Romania had more understanding for them than the Hungarians here.

THE 'GÁBORS'

According to the linguistic classification used in Hungary the merchant Gábor gypsies belong to the 'kelderash' tribe of Vlach gypsies. Forming a very closed community, the kelderash are the group which have the strongest attachment to their language and tradition. Their ancestors engaged in the traditional trades of making braziers and other copper objects. This trade is still carried on by many of them in Transylvania but the demand for their products has been decreasing.

The Gábor gypsies come to Hungary to engage in commercial activities. They reported good commercial contacts with non-gypsies both in Romania and Hungary, but their close

contacts are restricted to other Gábor gypsies (endogamy). These contacts are strongly influenced also by the place on the "economic ladder". They were coming to Hungary regularly before the social transformation, attending the fairs held in major towns (Szeged, Békéscsaba, Debrecen).

All of them speak good Romany, Romanian and Hungarian. The *pater familias* and the sons always have 8 years completed at primary school. The women can only read and write.

The members of the family we interviewed sell shoes. They buy the merchandise in Romania or Hungary (e.g. at Chinese markets), but they also have merchandise from other countries (e.g. Italy, Germany or Slovakia). Selling the shoes is the men's task. Women and children sell flatware, pots and pans. They partly peddle or address prospective customers in the streets of town or city centres.

The family is very mobile. If business goes badly in Hungary, the men switch to neighbouring countries and try to sell there the merchandise they have bought.

Better-off Gábor gypsies come to Hungary by car and sell their goods in various parts of the country. They always buy their merchandise on the basis of well-founded information about the place or places where they will sell. They get this information through the phone, which may be the ordinary telephone installed in their flats or houses or the mobile phone. Their destinations are set by the merchandise they have. Contacts in the target countries (those giving them accommodation) are usually arranged beforehand, and the Gábors have their own capital, so the only organisational task they have is to get the required documents (e.g. work permits).

The Gábor gypsies usually rent rooms or flats from well-to-do Vlach gypsies (merchants) here in Hungary, with whom they have long-standing contacts. A room of four metres by four metres (such as a detached kitchen used during the summer) usually costs forty to fifty thousand HUF a month. They have built up such contacts with non-gypsies as well, from whom they usually rent small flats (two rooms, one small, one reasonably sized) in big blocks of flats on modern housing estates for sixty to seventy thousand HUF a month.

There is a certain price to be paid for these rented flats, however. In order to be 'admitted' by a non-Roma family, they have to shed their markedly gypsy characteristics: the men have to give up wearing their wide-brimmed black hats, exchange their vests for jackets and the women have to slip into dresses, which are simple and long, instead of their colourful, ample skirts. (This can be viewed as a kind of first stage in forced assimilation.) When they go back to Romania, however, they look the part of true Gábor gypsies again.

The economic situation in Hungary is better than in Romania but here in Hungary non-gypsies have more of a negative attitude to „strangers". The Gábors can make their living at home in Romania. They have their own houses and cars. But if they do business in Hungary, their income is several times more than the money they have invested. When they go to Western countries, they do it for the purpose of business, without any intention to settle down. Hard as life may be in Romania, they think of it as their mother country.

WORKERS

Romanian Roma workers sell their labour force in Moszkva tér in Budapest in the hope that they can send their families at home enough money to give them the bare necessities.

We talked to nine men in Romany. All the men, between 18 and 40, said they were of gypsy descent, but only two of them spoke the gypsy language. Three said they had a family at home in Romania (two to three children), the other six were living with their parents or were divorced. All lived in very poor housing (houses made from adobe bricks with a kitchen and one room, without modern conveniences). Two of the nine men were skilled (wall-painter, mason), the others semi-skilled workers. They found no jobs in Romania, where they get no unemployment benefit. (Their wives and children at home go begging.) They usually spend one or two weeks here, depending on their success in finding a job. Those who have been lucky come here again on a regular basis. Mediators in Hungary speak both Romanian and Hungarian. Most of them are Romanian Hungarians rather than gypsies.

The 'working Roma' we interviewed all came to Hungary by train. They asked people around the railway station (Nyugati pályaudvar) where they could find 'piazza romana', i.e. the 'Romanian market'. Somebody put them on the number four tram and saw them to Moszkva tér, the official name of which they did not even know.

To cover travel expenses they take a loan (worth 20,000 HUF) on rather harsh terms: they have to pay back double by a specified deadline. They give half of it to the family who stay home and take the other half with them for the journey. Their only chance to avoid a homeless lifestyle is to find work very soon.

What is at stake in the migrating strategy of Romanian working gypsies is sheer physical 'survival'. Many in the group told us they had worked in Turkey, where they had the opportunity to sell one of their inner organs, but they were not willing to make money at such a cost.

Paradoxically enough, the main facilitators for the Romanian working gypsies in Hungary – the middlemen – are at the same time their main hindrance. Their situation remains for ever hopeless: they can never get rid of the dependence involved in working abroad without official papers. The middleman 'is entitled' to take off 1000 HUF of the 3–5,000 they make a day. If the middleman finds them 'lasting' work, he will be satisfied with less, e.g. 20,000 HUF for a job that lasts a month. 'Normal' accommodation for the night (costing 2000 HUF) is almost beyond their means; a bath may cost them up to 1000.

Even such an exploited work relationship is not secured for them. Police make regular raids in Moszkva tér and drive them off the place.

Everyone in the group we interviewed had the experience that people in Hungary were not helpful (for instance, nobody helped them at a post office when they wanted to buy a phone card).

'HUNGARIAN GYPSIES'

Why do the members of the group we examined identify themselves as 'Hungarian gypsies'?

All of the men we interviewed try to maintain good relations with Hungarians both in Romania and in Hungary. They said they had rather inimical relations with Romanians in Romania, but good relations with non-gypsies in Hungary: they have not only tenancy and maintenance contracts but even marriage contracts with them. At the same time, this does

not mean they are comfortably 'based' in Hungary. They are exposed to daily atrocities on account of their being gypsy.

The 'Hungarian gypsies' who speak not only Romanian but also Hungarian no longer use Romany in the family (linguistic assimilation). They distinguish themselves both from the Gábors and from the 'Romanian gypsies'. They do not keep contact with them, but they are on greeting terms (e.g. at a market).

The economic situation of the individual members of the group we interviewed was not identical. T., who sells minerals, is in the best position: he is renting a flat part of which he sub-lets to Romanian gypsies. R. and E. sell clothes. R.'s circumstances are much poorer: he has not enough money not only to 'bring over' his 17-year-old daughter but even to pay for the permissions for selling at markets. P. is relatively well-off, making and repairing musical instruments at home and selling them in Hungary. B. is in the most difficult situation of all: he lives from casual jobs and cannot afford to rent a room, staying at various places 'for free'.

As far as the cultural background of gypsies from Romania is concerned, few of them have learnt some trade: T. is a miner, B. is a tractor driver and B.'s son is a waiter. P. learnt how to make instruments from his father, not at a school. R. and E. have completed the primary school.

Only E. has her whole family staying in Hungary (her husband is Hungarian, but she is a Romanian citizen). R. is divorced, his daughter lives with the grandparents in Romania, coming to Hungary for brief periods to see her father now and then.

R. and T. return to Romania to visit every thirtieth day. Both live in a rented room here in Hungary. They exemplify one of the characteristic migration strategies of Hungarian gypsies from Romania.

P. lives in Romania and always comes to Hungary for brief periods, living mostly with his migrant brothers or sisters. This exemplifies the other type of migration between Romania and Hungary.

B. does not go home to Romania. He once went further west (to France), but he finally returned to Hungary. He does not want to live in Romania; indeed, he would like to bring his family over here for good. T.'s case is similar in certain respects: he, too 'ventured to the West' once and has kept going back ever since whenever he could (e.g. to Denmark).

As far as contacts with other migrants are concerned, B. has the most extensive network of contacts of all our interviewees, both in France and in Hungary, but he, too keeps close contacts with Hungarian gypsies only. Similarly, T. has a number of such contacts, renting rooms to gypsies who come to Hungary from Romania. R. and E. have kept in touch uninterruptedly with other Hungarian gypsy groups coming from Romania. For P. and B.'s son these contacts have always been restricted to their relatives.

All the people in the group first thought of coming to Hungary after the revolution in Romania.

B. is a political refugee of sorts: he had to leave the country because of his active involvement in the events in Tirgu Mures ('Marosvásárhely' in Hungarian) in 1990. Invited by a non-gypsy Romanian woman (C:, an engineer) he went to Rennes in France. When his thirty-day permit expired, he did not wish to return to Hungary. He went to Paris and managed to get permission to stay on (he had to register with the police once every month). He slept in the metro or in railway stations around Gare de Lyon, like the other Hungarians,

gypsies and Romanians from Romania. He worked as a luggage man and as a waiter, he sold newspapers issued by the organisation of the homeless, and did some trafficking. He met wandering gypsies who tell fortunes from cards, beggars, traffickers and musicians from Romania as well as Hungarian emigrant intellectuals from Transylvania. He contacted the latter group through a Calvinist church congregation in Paris, having taken a tip given by an Arab he knew. In the congregation he met D., a pastor, V., a professor, and the Hungarian-born director of European Space Research. These acquaintances also meant concrete material help for him (e.g. accommodation).

But he had to leave France in the end, not having been granted refugee status by the court. He flew back to Hungary.

R. and E. told us that they first came to Hungary only for one- or two-day brief 'visits' and sold mainly clothes. They decided to extend their stays when they accepted an offer made by Hungarians at the railway station fishing for would-be tenants.

In the place where R. and E. first rented a room, they found many people in a situation similar to theirs. In the same house R. met an elderly Hungarian woman and stayed in her flat for eight years whenever he came to Hungary. Since the elderly lady's death, he has been renting a cottage without modern conveniences, which is owned by E's sister's husband's sister.

In the beginning T. received a great deal of help from what he described as the 'Transylvanian Office'. They helped him find a job in the mine near Pécs and, after the mine had been closed down, a job in a tile factory. Finally, while already selling minerals, he was introduced to his present landlord by the wife of an African person who does business in Budapest.

B.'s son and P. and R.'s daughter began coming to stay with their relatives who were already resident in Hungary, and did business every time.

The people we interviewed told us that their resources were rather modest, amounting to nothing more than a small active capital. B.'s 'resources' consist in almost nothing else than his contacts.

One of the greatest difficulties Hungarian gypsies from Romania have to overcome is the necessity of getting the 'official papers'. They shuttle between Hungary and Romania, or often only the Romanian border, to have their passports stamped again.

They find their activity successful when the Romanian merchandise they sell in Hungary makes enough money not only to cover their living expenses in Hungary but also to leave them with them something to take home to their families. This is not true of B., a political refugee who cannot go back: success for him would mean having his family brought over from Romania.

None of them has favourable experiences of the Hungarian authorities. They are afraid of them and do not seek their help. (B. learnt that he had been granted refugee status long after the official decision because he had been avoiding policemen.)

Those in our group who had been to Western Europe told us that the gypsies living in the West were in a much better political and economic situation than either in Hungary or in Romania.

The Roma in Canada: Emigration from Hungary from the Second Half of the 1990s[1]

By László Endre Hajnal

In this piece I examine the migration of Hungarian Roma to Canada. The major subject of my enquiries is the community of a Vlach Gypsy family, many of whose members have been trying to settle down permanently in Canada since 1997. In the course of my research I met several other groups, too, of whom I have but scanty information due to the cursory nature of my acquaintance with them. The procedures followed while collecting and analysing my data derive from the methodology and the definition of culture applied by cultural anthropology. As well as conducting interviews, I acted as participant observer among the members of the community split, in terms of residence, into two groups respectively based in Budapest and Canada. Rather than view it in isolation, I try to interpret migration in the context of other aspects of the community's culture as an equal constituent of a complex phenomenon taking into consideration the standpoints of the participants in the process, as well as all factors dependent on themselves (Niedermüller, 1990: 231; Puskás, 1982: 30–31). My emphasis is clearly not on presenting the entire process within a broad social context or providing a macrotheoretical interpretations in the terms of a demographic, economic and political approach. Such theories, formed in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, saw emigration as resulting from one or another major transformation of society. One of these was the theory of push and pull as formulated by Ravenstein, or theories which found the only explanation of the phenomenon in the differences between the rate at which the economies, labour markets and populations of the various regions developed. Mine is a micro-level approach providing a more complex analysis which, focusing on members of a particular community, attempts to interpret the process of migration as shaped by the interaction between external forces and the cultural peculiarities of the community itself. Needless to say, while presenting the process of migration, I also look, highlighting economic conditions but without attempting to give a comprehensive overview, at the everyday life of the community as it is taking shape in its new environment. As I hope, inquiries of this sort can deepen our understanding of the culture shared by the target community as well as uncover the process of migration.

Having said that much, it is to be borne in mind that only a few years have passed since the beginning of Roma migration to Canada, which is why one should be careful with

[1] Acknowledgments for their contributions to the funding of my Canadian research go to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Institute of Minority Research – Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies. My special thanks are due to András Ráfael for the extensive help he gave me with my work.

drawing any general conclusions. And yet, the great opportunity of current research is that it can be present at the emergence of a new community: the cultural peculiarities of the sening community are still clearly tangible, peculiarities whose adaptation to the new environment has much to offer to the student of Roma culture.

The actual research took three months of the year 2000; in its course I conducted one-on-one and group interviews with members of a Budapest-based Vlach Gypsy family that I had known for years. The material thus accumulated was published in an article (Hajnal, 2000), whose conclusions I have used in the present piece. During my research work certain difficulties came to the surface, difficulties that anyone addressing the topic will be faced with. Going on for two or three years now, the process of Hungarian Roma migrating to Canada has been followed by all parties, whether individuals or institutions, participating, to whatever extent, in the discourse involving the situation of the Roma in Hungary as well as the participants in the process itself. It is hard to make a statement or offer an explanation which, often misinterpreted or wilfully twisted, should not be turned into a political weapon. In certain topics one should even be wary of providing even factual descriptions in case they are used for the purposes of various superficial and unscientific interpretations. The keen public attention and increased sensitivity besetting the topic are mostly perceived by those directly involved in the issue themselves; these people follow closely the media coverage of the matter while trying to obtain additional information via informal channels. People thus impacted are families who are currently living in Hungary with relatives already in Canada, and who might themselves be considering taking the same opportunity themselves. Others involved are those who have spent some time oversees themselves, but have decided, for whatever reason, to return to Hungary. From such individuals, it is very difficult to obtain any detailed or usable information on the circumstances and substantial aspects of their migration. There is great apprehension on their part despite years of mutual acquaintance. Some are anxious about the success of their planned-for journey, others worry about their relatives abroad, while the returnees fear legal retribution.

With regard to the above, after the research was begun in Hungary, it became clear that any complex, multi-faceted approach to the issue required that inquiries be made among the members of the community already living in Canada. One of my best Roma friends, currently staying in Budapest, who exerts quite some influence within the community, gave me recommendations to his relations living in and around Toronto, many of whom I had met before (and who, in their turn, were acquainted with my earlier work with the community). After a few telephone exchanges I travelled to Canada, where I sought out a family in the small town of Welland, some 120 kilometres from Toronto. The head of the family I had seen on one or two occasions in Budapest, but the others I had not met before.

It was in this environment that I did my field work for a month in late 2000. It was, as it goes without saying, the life of this family that I had most insight into. I was involved in their everyday activities, participated in their feasts, and took part in trying to solve the difficulties of life as they arose. In the course of this participant observation I met and talked to individuals and families living in and around Toronto. They mostly fitted into my friends' network of family and other connections, and I had met several families like these back in Hungary. During my work I was faced, to an even greater extent, with the difficulties familiar from Hungary. Regardless of any former acquaintance, and especially in the beginning, my enquiries were met with distrust and suspicion even more intense than what I had

come up against in Hungary. They feared that the findings of my work might be turned against them by the Canadian immigration bureau if, as they thought could happen, the Hungarian authorities misused the information I was to obtain. That was why I refrained from using a tape recorder or a notebook during the interviews, recording what I had heard and experienced in my field journal at the end of the day instead. What gave me the most difficulty was, understandably, taking photographs.

Before my return to Hungary my hosts and I agreed that I would continue my work in the near future. This became feasible in the spring of 2001, when I managed to spend another two months in Canada. Selecting the place to stay at was a forgone conclusion. My former hosts would have been offended if I had decided to stay anywhere else, although the family had moved into a smaller flat in Welland. I found it far easier to do my work now than I had done the first time, as many were familiar with the piece I had written up on the basis of my first stay there.

It is important to emphasise that the combined duration of three months that I spent in Canada altogether was insufficient to conduct research into every aspect of the community's life there. What is thus highlighted in this article are thus the daily economic issues of making a living as well as insight into the functioning of the community's network of connections, based as it is on the family and the relations, because that is what determines the practice of migration. Areas that has thus been left undiscovered (and supplementing of incomplete information) require further research; part of that I try to determine within this article. In the course of my work I also prepared a photographic essay of the life lived by the emigrant families.

OFFICIAL PROCEDURES UPON ARRIVAL, SOURCES OF HELP WITH PRELIMINARY INTEGRATION

Immigrants from Europe to Canada have been arriving in ever smaller numbers in recent decades with their proportions also falling off (Harney, 1998: 21). Since 1975, immigrants from the Third World have become predominant (Neuwirth, 1999: 51). This tendency has been somewhat modified in recent years by a larger number of immigrants from Central Europe claiming themselves to be of Roma nationality. The sending countries include the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and the successor republics of the former Yugoslavia. Families claiming themselves to be of Roma origin are admitted as refugees under the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol (Tóth, 1994: 17–18).

A primary destination of families arriving from Central Europe, and Hungary within that, is mostly the Eastern seaboard and, mainly, Toronto.[2] That is where direct flights can be

[2] In Hungary I talked to a Romungro family whose relations were settled on the west coast of Canada. I also talked to a young man of the same Romungro background who had spent months with his brother in Vancouver. These interviews, together with information obtained in Canada, suggest that Roma migration to Canada is not limited to the Eastern regions of the country. However, the families I have studied are not aware of emigrants living outside Toronto or at least the province of Ontario. There are references nevertheless to the existence of Roma communities based in Western Canada. One article gives a more or less detailed description of how the Western Canadian Roma Association works. The primary objective of the association is to organise and assist Roma families in the Vancouver area (Lovell, 2000: 10).

booked to, which may be more expensive, but eliminates difficulties related to transfer-situations arising mostly from the lack of language skills and relevant experience. The authorities of transit countries might also return Roma travellers on account of insufficient funds. Another attraction of Toronto is that it is here and around the city that the largest groups of recent Roma immigrants (having arrived within the last three or four years) can be found.

The first people the refugee claimants meet in Canada are officials of the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Official procedures tend to take a routine course, but claimants are often kept waiting for hours. That occurs after an 11-to-13-hour flight, which can be a taxing experience for the jet-lagged arrivals the majority of whom are first-time travellers over such a distance and whose families often include infants. Interpreters speaking Hungarian are provided by the government, although in the night such help is mostly available via telephone only. Refugee claimants have to give a brief rationale for their decision. Their statement is recorded in writing, after which their particulars, finger prints and photographs are taken. Passports, driving licences and other identification are taken from the claimants, who are then each issued with a replacement photo ID instead. If there are no friends or relatives waiting at the airport volunteer to look after the new arrivals in the first period, then they are driven by taxi downtown, where they have to spend the first night or two in a motel or hotel. They are then provided with the addresses of refugee shelters where there are vacancies available; when there is more than one address on offer, the claimants are free to make their own choice. Within the first few hours of arrival, assistance is provided by IRB officials who escort the families and cover any necessary expenses they may incur.

Refugee shelters tend to be situated on the outskirts of larger cities, sometimes along motorways, away from any residential areas. There are purpose-built facilities, but unused motels (usually in a poor state of repair) have also been appropriated by the board. Families are accommodated together, while individuals are put up separately. Well-heated rooms with cooking facilities are provided, but the buildings have communal kitchens, too. Shared bathrooms, toilets and laundry rooms are located at end of a hallway.

Claimants are usually obliged to spend three to six weeks at a shelter, the exact period depending on the rate at which their cases are being processed. In the meantime, school-aged children are bussed to school locally so that as little study time is lost as possible. Adults are issued with pocket-money and allowed to go downtown from where they have to return for the night, which they have to spend at the shelter. They are subjected to mandatory medical tests and required to fill in a long form called PIF (Personal Identification Form). The document contains rubrics for particulars as well as blanks to be filled in with the detailed CV of the claimant up to the moment of arrival, including reasons for their decision to claim refugee status. The documents have to be returned to the immigration office. A follow-up interview with an IRB-official is tantamount to acknowledgement of the claim, on which the applicant assumes the official status of Convention Refugee Claimant. The claimant is then issued with a social insurance card a temporary ID card, together with a larger sum meant to facilitate new beginnings (those entitled to it call the sum 'starting-line money' or 'furniture money'.

It is from that time on that the shelter can be left for independently rented lodgings. Landlords in the area of the shelter seize the opportunity and approach with their offers

the management of the shelters who then give the addresses to the residents. Exploiting the difficult situation and inadequate language skills of the refugees, landlords often ask for higher rents than customary prices. Families tend to settle down, at least in the first few months, in the neighbourhood of the shelters, where their children go to school, and where flats are easier to find due to the refugees' familiarity with the area gained in the meantime. The 'starting-line money' enables them to furnish their flats and acquire basic household utensils. Having moved in, they are issued with monthly welfare benefits and they are provided with legal assistance in the person of a Hungarian-speaking advisor, who helps them attend to their official business and prepare for their forthcoming court appearance.

The sum of government and local assistance in the form of family and refugee welfare ranges from CAD 1,100 to 2,000. Welfare is payable on condition that children aged 6–16 are sent to school, and at least one of the parents regularly attends a language course. Single individuals arriving without family find themselves in a more difficult position as they have to make both meet on a monthly allowance of CAD 500.

The period between moving out of the shelter and the first court hearings (meant to establish the legal status of the family) tends to be 11 to 12 months. Refugee claimants arrive from all over the world, escaping from the local 'mafia' or from being persecuted for their race, faith or sexual orientation. Processing the arrivals puts no little strain on Canadian authorities, who have to decide on a case-by-case basis whether they are dealing with genuine asylum-seekers, economic migrants or migrants motivated by other considerations (e.g. to evade criminal investigation). The authorities do all they can to determine the record of each claimant, while the latter, continuously seeking advice from the legal counsel paid by the Canadian authorities, try to build a 'story' meeting every legal specification, which they will have to present in court. What the story is meant to prove is that the claimant and his or her family were indeed persecuted in the country of origin, whose authorities failed to provide sufficient protection, which is why the claimant was obliged to leave his native land.

EVERYDAY LIFE AND ECONOMIC STRATEGIES IN THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

What makes Canada a particularly attractive proposition to Roma families leaving Hungary is – besides the openness of its multi-cultural society and the fact that its a visa-free zone[3] – its potent economy and comprehensive welfare system. Naturally, there are highly exaggerated ideas about Canada's advantages, especially among those staying at home, but it is a fact that Canada is, particularly from the perspective of certain regions of Central Europe, an exceedingly rich country, which has boundless opportunities to offer to those wishing to settle down there.

There is widespread agreement in anthropological studies devoted to the peculiarities of Roma culture that one major cultural characteristic of these communities is the promptness

[3] Obligatory visa system was introduced on 5 December 2001. *(Editor's note.)*

and dynamism with which they adapt to the changes in their environment; they are remarkably flexible in adjusting their economic strategies and activities to changing circumstances (Formoso, 2000: 58-59; Liègeois, 1998: 57). They employ very efficient methods of conforming to the transformations occurring in the economy, and they do the same when the Gypsy community itself changes the framework of its life when moving to a place among new circumstances (Stewart, 1994: Chapter Vii; Piasere, 1997: 122). Although they cannot ignore the economy surrounding them (Piasere, 1997: 32–33), they do everything possible under the given circumstances to engage in economic activities independent of the given environment (Okely, 1983: 53–56). The importance of this paradox (i.e. the contradiction between the Roma's dependency on the world of the non-Roma and their simultaneous efforts to preserve the integrity and self-sufficiency of the community) is emphasised in most modern studies of Roma culture. It is in this connection that the issue of Roma groups' attitude to wage-earning labour is raised. Wage-earning labour belongs to the non-Roma, non-gypsy world, and efforts at repudiating it are seen by many as an integral part of the Roma identity (Formoso, 2000: 58; Stewart, 1994: 23; Williams, 2000a: 341).

The attitude of the community I examined to work and earning money was characterised by largely the same peculiarities in Hungary, too. They were engaged in economic activities, with varying degrees of success, that had little effect on the community's integrity and the independence of the families in that community from their environment. The activities characteristic of the community included hawking all sorts of wares. They traded in precious stones and metals, watches, works of art, antiques, cars, scrap non-ferrous metal, consumer electronics and clothing, perfumes, foodstuffs, drinks and real estate, and indeed almost anything that promised satisfactory profits and a quick turnover. These commercial activities were but seldom conducted in the framework of a registered firm or on the permanent premises of a shop or at a stand, which – together with the transitory nature of Hungary's economy in the 1990s – greatly facilitated the instant reorientation of these operations. Further inhibited by the lack of vocational skills, seeking regular employment was uncharacteristic, but occasional employment was more frequent (Hajnal, 1999: 92–99).

In the rest of this piece I describe the everyday life of those members of the community who emigrated to Canada, highlighting their economic activities aimed at earning a living.

Techniques of making daily life easier

Toronto is a real metropolis with all the good and bad points of a big city. Those settling down here expect, primarily, to find more opportunities of making money, of finding employment without having to cover great distances to and from work. Further, there are more business opportunities here, forming contacts is easier, and there are a large Roma population of a Hungarian origin as well as Hungarians of a non-Roma background living here. Rents, however, are higher, transportation and food are more expensive, and parking one's car is a headache. Bugs and rodents are more frequent in flats. Although there are sprawling suburbs, affordable accommodation can mainly be found in high-rises of 25–35 floors. Monthly rents vary between CAD 700 and 1,100, and an advance payment of two months' rent has to be deposited. Due to higher essential expenses, it is harder to live on welfare, which is why only those will stay in Toronto who have additional sources of income.

Those unwilling or unable to live a more expensive life will look for residence in the environs of Toronto, which include small towns lying at a distance of no less than 100 to 120 kilometres from the big city. Such places are Hamilton, Welland, St. Catharines or Niagara Falls where a large number of Roma families from Hungary have settled down in recent years. Due to the advanced infrastructure and lower than European fuel prices it is quite feasible to commute by car to Toronto on a daily basis. Comparatively low rents, at about half those in Toronto, are the greatest attraction. These places are typical North American small towns with a maximum of one or two hundred thousand inhabitants, a small downtown area, but expansive suburbia, a grid-iron town plan, great distances, huge and very well stocked department stores uptown, concentrated service and entertainment facilities and all sorts of retail outlets.

Towns built according to that pattern have given rise to a peculiar way of life, and a central feature of this lifestyle is the automobile. While public transport is both inefficient and expensive, the car is a mass-produced and universally affordable product, which, due to the peculiarities of urban planning described above, is an essential item on the list of consumer durables. It is also to be noted that the automobile played a crucial part in the lives of most Roma families back in Hungary. Besides considerations of comfort and prestige, having a car is one aspect of the way that the Roma, particularly the urban Roma, operate in space. Moving around in one's own car or by taxi, and thus avoiding public transport can be interpreted as the extension of home turf, which provides a sense of protection and security. With the environment thus eliminated, the exclusion of alien patterns of behaviour and foreign spaces is also achieved; the urban structure of spaces is therefore sharply divided into foreign and familiar parts (Hajnal, 1999: 87–90). Those intending to settle down in Canada cannot use their European driving licences (due to multiple differences in the highway code). If one wishes to drive, one will have to attend a driving course and then take a driving test. It is of prime importance for Roma families to have at least one member per family who has a driving licence. A car aged eight to ten years is affordable even to a Roma family living in Canada for a few months, and they can even afford the pollution test and the number plate, too.

In Wellington, which is in the Toronto region, a terraced house with every modern convenience, consisting of three bedrooms, a living room, a dining room, a garage and a laundry, can be maintained, although with some difficulty, on the welfare payable to a family with several children. And then the larger living space here and the small garden, besides the comfort these offer, help the family economise, too: in the garage, smaller repair and maintenance jobs can be done to the car, and there is sufficient room for more than one freezer, where food bought at a discount can be stored. However, a flat in a multi-storey apartment house has the advantage of there being no extra overhead costs as the rent includes heating, electricity and hot water, too.

The families I knew all kept a substantial house where three large meals a day was a common feature. Meat is a staple food, usually prepared to Hungarian recipes. Food prices in Canada were at Hungarian levels during my stay there, which means they were low compared to the income levels customary in the country. What is more, one can buy food at bargain prices in a small town, for example at provincial slaughterhouses, where semi-processed meat (such as an unpacked half-pig) is sold at wholesale prices, which are even lower than those at normal discount outlets. The family then processes the basic

material thus acquired, which is then stored in the freezer. That is why bacon is sometimes steamed in an upper-storey flat, or ham is cured in a make-shift smoking chamber set up in the corner of a backyard behind a terraced house. There are occasional bargains, too, such as those provided by the male member of a refugee family living in a neighbouring town, who supplemented his income, during my stay in Canada, with shoplifting. He specialised on food products – cured meat, sausages, ham, salami – but he took orders for such delicacies as caviar, salmon, pigeon or lamb, too. He sold his merchandise at half the retail prices to his clientele, which consisted of Hungarian and Roma immigrants.

Bread is expensive and the local varieties taste foreign to the majority of new arrivals from Hungary, which is why fresh white bread is baked several times a week in many immigrant households, which also makes life considerably cheaper. The various family support groups often initiate relief campaigns, which frequently take the form of food gifts handed out to those in need. This source is also exploited by many, especially those who have storage space for the quality tinned food, pasta or preserves.

Besides the expenses surveyed above, a major item of the family budget is spent on clothing. Similarly to the system familiar from Europe, clothes of average quality are to be had in large department stores, especially at seasonal sales. The families often acquire, mainly for the children, second-hand (but little-used) clothes at free garage sales promoted by church organisations. Another popular practice is swapping clothes among the families, whereby pieces that the children of one family have grown out of are passed on to poorer relatives or new arrivals. This inter-family circulation of goods involves second-hand furniture, pots and pans, household appliances and cheaper entertainment electronics, too.

Expenditures listed above, together with expenses related to the schooling of the children, are paid from monthly welfare checks. Government welfare is only meant to cover subsistence-level expenses, but these are adjusted to Canadian standards. The families live in multi-bedroom apartments, in an appropriate environment, they have nourishing and varied food, wear fashionable clothes, and the children go to school.

> "...there are those who are poor as dirt at home, those who live on municipal aid together with their families. Welfare at home is peanuts compared to what they give you there, and that's why so many decide to leave. For three years, while it's not sure if they'll have to return, they will live in a fine apartment without having to work. If they have a small flat at home, they will sell it, and put the money in a bank, and with their account they might pull off a deal or two there. There they will do nothing much, but will live quite well, if they happen on something profitable here and there, something on the criminal side or a little unregistered work, so if they're in luck, they will even put a little by, with which they can make a new start back home. Of course, many will come back without a penny in their pocket to find themselves on the street again, unable to buy even a small studio flat here." (From an interview with G. R. a Roma entrepreneur. Budapest, spring 2000)

Wage-earning labour

Within a month or two of arrival, the families are adequately housed, they have furnished their apartments, their children go to school, and they have gathered all essential information on their neighbourhood, its inhabitants and opportunities. Some of the families consider looking for additional sources of income to supplement welfare. If a member of the family, usually a man, seeks legal employment, he will have to register with the local municipality. Although part of the welfare money is forfeited if one goes out to work, it is an important consideration to many that a major point can be scored with the court when it comes to passing a decision on the claim for refugee status, if the claimant can cite his employment as evidence of integration into the host society.

Every larger town has its employment agencies. Those turning to one of these are required to draw up a resume listing their qualifications, previous jobs and professional experience. Applicants will of course try to include the widest variety of professional experience possible. As they are exempted from documenting their claims due to their refugee status, these people will often list occupations in which they have had no previous experience, but where they believe to be able to live up to expectations if so required. Most members of the families I came to meet had had no formal vocational training whatsoever. None of them had a college degree or a high-school diploma, and few had qualifications as skilled workers. Those who had had some vocational training had little advantage over the others as their skills were outdated and unsuited to requirements in Canada, and they did not speak the language either. A truck driver, a security guard, or a forklift operator who speaks no English and lives in Canada as a refugee can hardly find a job suited to his qualifications.

There were quite a few people who had had some kind of vocational experience in Hungary (mainly in the construction industry), of course without any documented qualifications. According to the heads of Roma families it is not essential to have written proof of qualifications in Canada; what really matters is whether you can do your job or not. There are opportunities for getting qualifications as the government runs free occupational training courses for adults. Where formal qualifications are really necessary is if one intends to set up his own business in a field where such qualifications are officially required. Only those can, of course, consider enrolment in a course like that who have acquired basic skills in English and hold recognised refugee status, and can thus make long-term plans.

Most positions that can be formally registered occur in what is called the secondary sector, where such handicaps, each amplifying the other, as lack of schooling and qualifications, insufficient familiarity with local circumstances, etc., do not render the applicant ineligible for the low-prestige job on offer. Recent studies on immigration to Canada emphasise, beside the factors listed here, the crucial role played by language skills, and in relation to that, racial peculiarities in the process of the immigrants' economic and social integration. Rather than viewed in isolation, these factors are to be examined in their interaction with each other. For example, first-generation women immigrants with little or no mastery of English or French and with discernible external marks of their race (such as darker pigmentation), i.e. those who belong to a 'visible minority',[4] tend to receive less

[4] The meaning of the term 'visible minority' was defined in the early 1980s, and it has been in use in Canada ever since; in everyday language, its referent is largely the same as that of 'coloured'. A precise definition was

vocational training, their share of the labour market is lower, but they fill the largest percentage of poorly paid jobs requiring few skills (Boyd, 1999: 282; Neuwirth, 1999: 57; McGown, 199: 204). Although in principle new immigrants to Canada enjoy the same civic, economic or social rights as those with Canadian citizenship do,[5] in practice these people are, as documented in several studies, far from having equal opportunities. They are over-represented in unsanitary, hazardous, exhausting, uncomfortable, monotonous and poorly paid occupations and in the ranks of the unemployed. Such high proportion is also conspicuously present if the employment statistics of the Canadian-born population are compared with African or Asian-born immigrants of the same qualifications. It is in the first few years that immigrants have a particularly hard time finding employment that they are qualified for. They usually receive the statutory minimum wages, and it is their own efforts or their friends' or relatives' help that they have to thank for finding a job opening. (Needless to say, all this applies to refugees, and not 'independent immigrants' who tend to be highly qualified professionals or affluent investors.)

Jobs belonging to the secondary sector of the labour market easily available to new immigrants offer virtually no mobility, and are characterised by the rapid turnover of labour (Portes–Böröcz, 1989: 23–24). It is the physical abilities of labour that are primarily exploited in these areas of the economy with hardly any occupational competence expected, and if some is, it consists of the most easily learnable skills, which are rarely if ever transferable. Hardly any language competence is required in these simple and monotonous jobs either. Under circumstances like these, the employee regards his job as nothing more than a wage-earning activity where considerations of prestige play no role whatsoever. In the period following their arrival, it is to conditions prevailing in Hungary that refugees compare wages and workplace environment, and by such standards their employment situation in Canada appears to be favourable. This initial perception can lead to the misinformation of those staying at home with regard to opportunities available in Canada.

Men often find longer or shorter employment in the construction industry, where many have some prior experience. The contractor is often of Hungarian origin, in which case there are no language-related problems. Unskilled work is the prevalent form of employment, which can be sought even by those who have never worked in construction. The more experienced accept assignments that they are not formally qualified to carry out. Even those who have only worked as unskilled or semi-skilled workers before will claim to be bricklayers or house painters. And in most cases they can in fact do the job, which is largely due to the fact that Canadian technology tends to be far simpler than that customarily employed in Hungary, the materials used are of reliable quality, mechanisation is at a high level and tools are user and learner friendly. While on the job, the men try to make acquaintances in the neighbourhood, and often undertake to carry on simple repair jobs on their own, behind the back of their employer. When employed, they will work 10 to 12

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necessitated by various government programmes and equal opportunity legislation, which was how ten major 'visible minorities' were determined: blacks, South Asians, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, South-East Asians, Filipinos, other Pacific islanders, West-Asians and Arabs, Hispanics (Boyd, 1999: 283).

[5] It is in the final phase of integration that citizenship is granted in Canada. In the years-long period preceding that, refugees, 'landed immigrants' as their status is defined, are only excluded from political rights, while being in principle entitled to the full extent of civic, economic and social rights enjoyed by Canadian citizens (Neuwirth, 1999: 53).

hours a day, often at weekends, too. Those who find an opening will try to help their relatives make some money, too, which is why it is not infrequent to see six or eight family members working on the same construction site or on some other job. Besides doing unskilled labour, some are employed as bricklayers, house painters, tilesetters, plumbers, plaster-slab fitters, parquetry polishers, or carpet fitters. There are large numbers of orchards, farms, animal breeding plants and vineyards in the Toronto region, where seasonal work is widespread. Employment in these jobs requires no skills, but the pay is also lower than it is in the construction industry. These plants regularly recruit labour at the refugee shelters in their vicinity, often employing refugees illegally to whom they pay far less than the customary wages. These opportunities are only taken by Gypsy families in dire straits and then for the shortest time possible, but on such occasion the whole family work together, including the older children.

There are far fewer employment opportunities in a small town than in Toronto. Of these, quite a few are seasonal jobs only, as from November to March it is impossible to work outdoors due to the severe, snowy winter. In Welland the choice was largely limited to two types of job: one was working for the cannery outside the town, the other in the construction industry and in a way connected to Toronto. A Roma man living in Welland, who had worked in the construction industry back in Hungary, recruiting gangs for large-scale excavation and construction projects, met a Hungarian-born building contractor in Canada. The co-operation bore fruit, and after a while he could engage his brother, who had arrived in Canada in the meantime, and, for larger assignments, other relatives and subcontractor and only registered employee, whose responsibilities included recruiting friends living in Welland, too. After a while he began to operate as the Toronto contractor's labour. Besides doing manual jobs, he began to do part of the management work, too. They operate mostly in the suburbs of Toronto. They will leave for work in a van bought for the purpose early in the morning, and it is eight or nine o'clock by the time they get home at night. If more hands are needed, they go in two cars; of course, the owner of the second vehicle has his share of the work, too. Leaving early and returning late they can avoid rush-hour traffic and work ten-to-twelve-hour days. If suitably paid, they will work at the weekend, too. The Roma man gives regular work to five to ten people, but more than that are involved as there is much fluctuation. He only is registered with the authorities. In principle, wages are paid weekly, but there are many delays and thus much haggling over cancelled or postponed payment.

For that reason, the organiser is in continually strained relationship with several families, even though he emphasises that it's not him who pays the wages, that the contractor does not pay him properly either, and that the contractor himself is kept waiting by tardy customers, which is why he cannot pay up. Thus the matter of wages becomes an elusive issue. No one really dares to threaten the employer as these people work without work permits, and if the relationship should turn sour, recovering their wages could really be hopeless. In the case of larger debts, the men quit the job and wait more or less patiently, trying to believe in promises about getting their money. Withholding labour is not, however, an efficient means of putting pressure on the employer as there are always newcomers among the Roma who will be only too glad to fill the vacancies. Another recurrent source of arguments and tensions among the families is the issue of who the men in charge of recruiting should take on as fresh labour to some large-scale construction or renovation

project. Closer relations (the husband and two sons of one cousin) are of course convinced that they should have priority, but they lack the required skills and practice. In their case it is also harder for the man to postpone payment of wages too long, unlike with friends and acquaintances unrelated to the family. But irrespective of the closeness of family ties, the Roma families living in Welland all keep a watchful eye on the distribution of work, which is the subject of an animated exchange of information.

Another widely available employment opportunity is offered by the 'picklery' – a canning factory a few kilometres from the town. The place is accessible by car, so there is car pooling whereby those who do not drive can join car owners at an appropriate price. It is mostly assembly line work here, whereby pickles whose ends stick out have to be stuck back in the jar by hand or else cartons are to be removed from the belt and piled one on top of the other. Women and children over sixteen are employed here, too. There are morning and afternoon shifts both during the week and at the weekend with extra wages paid for work on Saturday and Sunday. People can come and work here continuously from spring to the end of the autumn season. This is officially registered work and the local employment agency issues applicants with work permits after a few weeks' waiting period. Wages for weekday work are extremely low, with hourly rates at CAD 6.5 to 7 during my stay there (which is around the statutory minimum and is thus below wages paid in the construction industry). Weekend hourly rates are almost doubled, but the privilege has to be earned with continuous weekday work. Being extremely very simple and monotonous, these jobs can be learned in a few minutes without any competence in English. Beside all its disadvantages, there are some major advantages of work at the cannery for the Roma. The most important of these is the fact that several friends and relatives can work in the same place. It is not infrequent that children go to work together with their parents, especially during the summer holidays and, of course, for shorter spells. Another good point is that low as they may be, wages are paid punctually and on a weekly basis.

Despite all these, wage-earning work cannot be said to be a characteristic or constant feature of life. Most families depend mainly on welfare, nicknamed 'the social', for their livelihood, which is paid in more than one instalment over the month. The sum is calculated to cover the bare necessities,[6] and those only in a household run with what we'd call prudence.[7] Seizing some wage-earning opportunities is only given any serious consideration by most Roma families if the family budget is drained of its last dollar with no hope left of filling the family's coffers from some alternative source.

My hosts, whose numbers included a few potential wage-earners at the time of my stay with them, were planning to apply for employment at the cannery for the whole summer. And cash was indeed in very short supply. With resources of earlier times having recently run dry, there was often insufficient money to fill up the tank of the family car. On days like that the suggestion was always made that "we should go and work at the picklery" or "the kids should join F. on the construction site for a few days". They kept planning to do

[6] Cf. p. 48.

[7] A comparative survey of resource-utilising practices in several Roma communities will be the subject of a later study. I would certainly recommend the simultaneous exploration of related practices among non-Roma communities living under similar social circumstances. Such a study would show whether the 'irrational and wasteful' economic practices described in connection with Roma communities may not be prevalent outside the Roma culture, too.

these things for as long as two months, even though there were openings in both places on more occasions than one, and they had even bought working garb at the beginning of the summer. But then something would always come up and prevent them taking up work. It was either that they managed to sell some trinket or a promising business opportunity was in the making, and if that failed, they could still touch someone for a loan to repay the most pressing debts.

The situation of other Roma families living around us was no different. Wage-earning work as a source of income was only done if the family was in dire straits indeed and then only temporarily. Three or four days' work, or a week's at the most, helped them solve their financial problems in the short term, and its was uncharacteristic for anyone to stay employed over longer periods of time. The following fragment from a conversation among men will indicate these people's attitude to wage-earning labour: "...we are the real Gypsies among all the other Gypsies; we are Vlach Gypsies with plenty of relations. We never do any work, but make money doing business and being street-smart!" Contrary examples perhaps included the male members of two related families in Toronto, who had been working for almost two years as skilled workers in the construction industry. But these had come to Canada and stayed in Toronto with the sole purpose of working and returning to Hungary with their earnings after two or three years.[8]

It was often mentioned with appreciation that nobody had come up against any overt discrimination in the workplace, which does occur in Hungary, even if its form and extent may be disputed (Kertesi, 2000: 442–445). Nobody in Canada had heard of a single instance of anyone not being made welcome at work on account of his background or skin colour. It is a generally accepted view among the Roma that those who intend to work in their new environment are sure to find acceptable employment. It is to be mentioned here that sending the children to school was mentioned as an issue of prime importance in most families, and not only because it is a condition of eligibility for welfare. The view was expressed that schooling is worth the time and energy it requires as such investment is sure to pay off in Canada. Anybody can find employment who has a marketable trade, and regular employment has tangible benefits, which is why one is not obliged to engage in theft or other criminal activities. Daily experience as well as various advertisements and television shows suggest that wealth and security are the function of regular work based on professional know-how. That recognition may turn out to have a great impact on the future lives of the younger generations of the immigrant Roma families.

> "I arrived at this conclusion that me in 1998, my two brothers and our families should go. My first thought was that of my kids' future. It would be easier to launch them into life in a country without racial discrimination, a country where you can go to school as anybody else, a country where you can have a decent occupation or a degree, even if you happen to be a Gypsy. And that is a very important thing! But to tell the truth, we also thought that 'plums would fall into our mouths' and that living well would

[8] The older male member of the family in Toronto was of Romungro background related to the community examined as an affinal relative as do the two families in Welland (the families of the man recruiting labour and his brother), whose male members have been continuously employed in the building industry. These two examples are of course insufficient basis for drawing any general conclusions.

be easier than it is at home. We thought there was money and an apartment waiting for us there and I wouldn't have to wake up without a penny in my pocket." (From an interview with A. L., a Roma retailer. Budapest, spring 2000)

"...what's more, you kid learns the language, they look at him differently, you can have him schooled properly. Here, back home, they finish the 8th grade, and surely won't go on, because grammar schools or universities don't take in gypsies. (From an interview with O. R., Roma entrepreneur. Budapest, spring 2000)

Few of the women go out to work in Canada, and then on a part-time basis only. That is because the woman is the housekeeper, whose tasks include making a hot meal every day and looking after children under school age who stay at home all day. Most often they clean staircases, offices, shops or, less frequently, private homes and also work as scullery maids in fast food places, jobs in a word, which do not involve full-time employment. Among the conditions of eligibility for welfare I have mentioned that it is mainly the female members of the families who attend compulsory language courses, which means a three-hour programme daily (if absences accumulate, part of the welfare payments may be discontinued). Infrequently though, but it does happen that three generations live in the same house, when the grandmother helps with the housework, which enables, in principle, every member of the middle generation to go out to work.

Some of the jobs mentioned so far can either be done legally or illegally. With illegal work, the families can claim the full sum of the welfare benefits, and it is simpler and faster to seize any opening, it is easier to switch from one workplace to another if circumstances should fall short of expectations. But there are drawbacks, too. Illegal workers are almost fully at the mercy of the employer, and the employee has no recourse to any official protection. Unreasonably low wages are regular, working hours are too long and occupational hazards are rampant. Official workplace inspections occur when, among other things, work permits have to be presented. However, the greatest source of insecurity for illegal employees is that they cannot take receiving their wages for granted. It is a frequently used ploy that after a while the employer finds fault with the work done, and, using that as an excuse, refuses to pay the agreed-on wages he owes or pays a fraction of the arrears only. Several Roma men perceived an analogy between conflicts like these and the situation that Romanian guest-workers find themselves in back in Hungary. Finally, it is also to be mentioned that involvement in this segment of the labour market tends, in itself, to imply a looser relationship with work, and thus the family members who go out to work are not connected, via their employment, with particularly strong ties to the host country's system of values and they do not very closely relate to their environment either. These phenomena, stemming from the position occupied within the labour market, may coincide with the aspirations, observable about several Roma communities, to reduce their dependence, to the greatest possible extent, on the surrounding society (Formoso, 2000: 58), but they also point towards a problem which can be said to be prevalent among immigrants to Canada. Involvement in the secondary sector of the economy does not go with any long-term or close connection that requires the adoption of cultural patterns, and one can frequently change jobs (and, related to that, addresses) without any consequences. With other immigrant groups, too, these tendencies put Canada's immigration policies severely to the test (Esses et al., 1999: 212–13).

Alternative sources of income

There are many who, besides living on welfare and wages, make attempts to explore such options in the informal sector of the economy as are exploited by large numbers of Roma living in Hungary, too (Tóth, 1998: 180–81). A considerable proportion of the families observed had earned their living through one form or another of commercial activities. Buying and selling, doing small-time business provided their livelihood on the one hand (Hajnal, 1999: 93), and enabled them to create "a way of life appropriate to the Roma" (Szuhay, 199: 160; Formoso, 2000: 63) on the other, which provided the foundations of autonomy and independence from other economies. The high level of social security and welfare received in Canada is sufficient, at least in the first few years, for the families with the intention of settling down here to remain independent and keep a distance from the economic practices and lifestyles of the host environment. There is time for getting acquainted with the surroundings, exploring business opportunities and, to exploit those, for weaving a network of connections.

Initially they try to exploit the openings within their own community, which can be observed about other groups of immigrants, too (Portes–Böröcz, 1989: 25). Narrow as this market may be, it supplements the income of several people for a longer or shorter period (Portes–Böröcz, 1989: 25). It is normally those having been here longer who try to capitalise, *vis à vis* the newcomers, on their experience. Most frequently, these practices involve the buying and selling or bartering of cars, valuable consumer electronics, furniture or jewellery within the communities, but various valuables and articles of daily use deriving from shoplifting and burglaries also tend to turn up, which are then available at prices way below their real value. It is easiest to sell anything to the new arrivals, who are unfamiliar with local conditions, but have a considerable purchasing power thanks to the larger sums they receive in welfare at the beginning. Newcomers or the less well-informed often acquire their cars from those members of the community who have been settled in Canada for some time even if their prices far exceed those payable elsewhere. However, these sellers offer hire-purchase plans and help with registration of property transfer, taking out an insurance property or buying a number plate. One segment of this market is directly related to the process of immigration itself. There are men who try to profit by their familiarity with immigration procedures and their relevant connections. These people can procure letters of invitation, air tickets for the newcomers, and it is also they who help solve problems arising in the process of settling down. (The phenomenon is discussed in more detail in the chapter devoted to the issue of networking.) And there are business dealings which go beyond the boundaries of the community. For example, the head of one family tried his hand at peddling perfumes in Toronto, something he had done in Hungary before. He would buy his brand-name perfumes wholesale, which he then took from shop to shop, from bar to bar. He approached the patrons and the staff – and not in vain either.

Of the economic strategies observable two are worth mentioning, which I met with during my first stay in Canada. Families had left Hungary fully aware of the fact that they would have to return if their claim for refugee status was rejected by the Canadian authorities. These people wanted to find employment as soon as possible as making and saving up money was a prime consideration to them. On leaving the refugee shelter they rented a flat; the children went to school and the adult members of the family, including the women,

began to work illegally. They worked the longest possible hours, not infrequently at the weekend, too, and often without any prior experience of working in a job requiring regularity. They look for steady sources of income, making less use of opportunities related to mobility than those intending to settle down on a long-term basis. With welfare covering their domestic expenses, they try to save up their earnings. They do not sell their homes in Hungary, and invest their savings into some business to be started in Hungary. The heads of the families told me that if their claims were rejected, they would return to Hungary, but after a period of three months they would come back to Canada, where they would lodge another claim for refugee status and start working for another year or two until they returned to Hungary permanently. Current refugee-related legislation in Canada makes all that possible. And yet the strategy is not all that easy to put into practice. The hardest part is to find a steady permanent job. Toronto is one's best bet, but here, as mentioned above, rents and other living expenses are higher than elsewhere. (If work is suspended for no more than a few weeks, which can easily happen, one has to fall back on reserves. And then there are the lures of consumerism: sums that appear to be fabulous from Hungary can melt away very easily.[9])

In the course of my second spell of fieldwork, which was only separated by half a year from the first, there were conspicuously more families deliberately exploiting the economic advantages arising from an ever more intimate familiarity with the conditions of immigration to Canada. I met families who were trying to start a new life in the New World for the second time now. They 'took a turn' in Hungary after their first stay in Canada either because their first application for refugee status had been rejected (together with their appeal) or because the new country had not quite answered their expectations at first sight, or possibly because a family member required extended medical treatment. Several families like that decided on re-emigration after a month or two at home, now relying on more extensive experience. It also happens occasionally that a family living in Canada persuades a relative in Hungary, especially a childless single person, such as a divorcee, to emigrate. Then these people move into the same house, where they have two sets of welfare, which goes a longer way to cover expenses on the one hand, and the newcomers can help with domestic chores on the other. There are now many who, relying on the ever broader flow of information and strengthening network of connections and practical experience as migration progresses, spend but a very short period of time in Canada.

> "Some would only go for a few months in the first place. I know someone who began to calculate. Return flight for two hundred thousand, then over there, he checks in with the authorities, he gets an aid of, say, 6,000 dollars, which he puts by and then tries to do some business. His relatives are already there, so he has a place to live and gets something to eat, too, so that won't cost too much. He wants to stay for six months before he returns home with the six thousand he had saved, which will be enough to begin something with. He will think of the whole affair as half a year's work that has earned him a thousand dollars a month, which he could put by while living well. Now that would be hard to pull off in Hungary."(From an interview with O. R. entrepreneur. Budapest, spring 2000)

[9] See footnote 7 again.

They go over to a related family already settled in there, and stay a month or two in the country. They will wait for their Canadian documents and the first, larger, sum of welfare meant to smooth over initial hardships, and then come back to Hungary with a few thousand dollars. Occasionally they will be able to bring back some gold, too, which is a well-liked form of capital accumulation.

Jewellery and expensive consumer goods can be acquired with abusing plastic money, too, an option preferred by those about to return home. For example, a relative living in Toronto struck up an acquaintance with a salesperson working for a jewellery chain, who gave his clients presenting 'refugee papers' the company's credit card. A card like that is immediately 'drained', i.e. the credit of a few thousand dollars is depleted. Some of the goods thus acquired go to middlemen with the rest sold 'on the double quick' (i.e. at depressed prices) to acquaintances or brought back to Hungary. Of course, there are other way of exploiting the extreme liberality of Canada's credit system, too. Many Canadian chain stores and shops regard refugee claimants as credit-worthy people with regular monthly incomes, who can be issued with credit cards and can purchase the company's goods up to a certain limit. Most families do in fact use that opportunity. When the family budget is running low, it comes in handy that larger stores sell their merchandise on credit within a certain limit. However, credit conditions are extremely unfavourable, as interest rates and handling charges are high. More often than not, families are unaware of these conditions as they can understand little of the information brochures. And few realise that if they default on paying instalments, the company will sue them at a credit court, and the family in arrears can forfeit its creditworthiness all over Canada. Repayment is indeed often a major headache as welfare is strictly adjusted to reasonable needs, and lacking alternative sources of income the family will end up piling up arrears. Any detailed discussion of the Roma communities' consuming, spending and credit-management habits would require further research.[10]

Starting a business in Canada was often talked of.

> "I'd have liked to do something really profitable. Not crime, mind you, as that's something you can do here, at home, too. So its work I wanted to do. As I had lived on commerce at home, I thought I'd try to live on the same thing there, too, trying to adapt to living there doing that. With my brother I planned to set up a coffee place or a mobile street bakery, which would have brought some money but also give us time to think of some clever schemes. because that sort of thing can be found anywhere if you look hard enough." (From an interview with the Roma retailer I. R. Budapest, spring 2000)

But I met only one actual case to exemplify that. The situation is likely to improve in time.[11]

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[10] The issue is touched upon in a study by Kata Horváth discussing the employment habits of a Roma community in the North of Hungary. The study makes a distinction between credits issued within the community on the basis of trustworthiness, and the "faceless, impersonal, and thus elusive credits" issued by banks (Horváth, 2001: 6).

[11] During my last stay in Canada, I had come across fake pollution tests for cars, meaning that, with the help of an acquaintance and for a certain amount of money, one only had to send in the papers of the car to the place where the test was to be conducted. Also, many of my acquaintances in Welland had already established, despite language-related difficulties, connections to municipal officials.

The franchise on a pizza place in Hamilton was taken out by Roma, who run the establishment as a family venture. Although the head of the family had had managed a business in the excavation industry, the man had no prior experience in catering. It is to be mentioned here that a largish Roma community had settled down in Hamilton, and their custom is something the owner of the pizza joint can rely on. Several ideas were brought up in conversation which promised a decent profit. These included a second-hand car business, construction-related services, a Hungarian-style restaurant or the operation of a sausage-frier, or some other business connected to Hungary in one way or another. Any activity requiring a large labour force was envisaged to be carried out on a family basis. The most frequent obstacle in the way of putting these plans into practice was a combination of insufficient capital, difficulties with the language and limited connections. As in Hungary, the launching of a legitimate business required innumerable permits, statements and certificates. These cost very much on the one hand, and, on the other, obtaining them requires the kind of connections available to an entrepreneur back in Hungary.

I did not meet any Roma entrepreneur who intended to invest in a Canadian business capital imported from Hungary.

Mention must be made, among sustenance strategies, of crime and related economic activities. There is shoplifting, there are burglaries into department stores and private apartments, there is pilfering, and there is involvement in fencing stolen goods. On one hand, temptation is great as flats and cars are often left unlocked in Canada, department stores are chock-full of goods, and security systems present no insurmountable obstacles. On the other hand, it is a deterrent that stolen goods are hard to sell and then at much lower prices than those they fetch in Hungary, and it is obvious that criminal proceedings jeopardise one's claim for refugee status. It has often been said in Hungary, and it is a recurrent feature of interviews with Roma people, too, that over-represented among emigrants leaving Hungary are those under criminal investigation or wanted by the police, possibly having an argument about some reckoning with certain circles of the underworld, and that such people cannot change their lifestyle in their new environment either.

> "A criminal in Hungary will be a criminal abroad, too, because he has a chance to be one as the country is not clever yet, it hasn't got smart yet! Here, when a Gypsy boards a tram, the people there will know he or she is a pickpocket. Everybody says that people oversees are very naive, as until you forfeit your honour, you'll be accepted as an individual, and they'll believe you anything. Of course, once you lose your credit, they'll turn their back on you. Before the Roma went there, they didn't really know what shoplifting was, so you could steal practically anything. I hear that there are now signs in every larger department store saying 'Please, do not steal!' I also hear that people would go up to you begging you not to steal. Expensive suits and dresses were stolen from stores after purpose-built tools were made with which exploding paint canisters can be detached. They take the thing of, put the clothes on and off they walk in the thousand-dollar stuff. And that they can then sell for two or three hundred dollars. So the country is dumb, but now they are getting smarter." (From an interview with O. R. entrepreneur. Budapest, spring 2000)

Cases like that do occur, but my experience tells me that this kind of behaviour is not really characteristic of the community examined. There are counter-examples, too: a Roma man who had been obliged to engage in self-supporting crime in Hungary took a regular, steady job when seeing the employment opportunities and the far higher wages paid. Chances of engagement in criminal activities are higher in the period directly following arrival, as refugees more readily conclude that their situation is hopeless when faced with the difficulties and uncertainties of the initial period. This negative effect is heightened by the depressing atmosphere characterising the refuge shelters.

In sum, the economic activities and sustenance strategies of the group I studied are characterised by diversity as well as significant openness and mobility observable about many other Roma communities, too. It should also be remembered that, at the time this survey was conducted, families arriving from Hungary had no more than two or three years' experience to rely on for exploring and exploiting their new economic environment. Many of their refugee hearings were still pending decision, which in itself influenced their choices.

Those arriving after 1998-99 were in a somewhat easier position. Thanks to information obtained via channels of family relationship, they can now form a more realistic picture of the conditions awaiting them, and after their arrival they can rely on the help of their relations living in Canada and exploit all the knowledge and experience the community has accumulated.

THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE NEW NETWORK OF CONNECTIONS AND THE SYSTEM OF RELATIONS IN THE PRACTICE OF MIGRATION

Empirical descriptions of the migration practices observable in the world, together with the professional literature published in Hungary and abroad, recognise the significance of networks of connection and stress the essential part they play in the process of migration (Fejös, 1993: 65–75; Hárs, 1991: 132; Lévai, 1993: 30; Oláh, 1996: 24; Portes–Böröcz, 1989: 16–17; Ram-Shin, 1999: 151–53). Removed to a new location, these networks are continually modified and expanded; they include the participation of all who have already reached the host country as well as non-migrant friends, relatives, and acquaintances in the sending country. New connections are established among recent arrivals and people already living in the new environment. New webs of information are spun within the emergent community as well as between the new and the sending communities. Although the phenomenon was not unknown in connection with the migration of earlier times (Fejös, 1993: 65–75), its intensity and reach have greatly been increased by the large-scale developments in travel, informatics and telecommunication systems. The process of migration is facilitated, altered, and in general, greatly accelerated by the networks of connection changing shape in the course of migration itself, together with the information relayed by these networks.

Groups at the beginning of the migration process are gradually familiarised with the economic practices and opportunities of the host country, they integrate into the system of social institutions of the new society, and learn the customs prevailing in the public life of the welfare society. They asses the extent and availability of welfare benefits, learn to use

the training courses on offer, the work of the authorities and the welfare and health services with increasing efficiency in their daily lives, explore the most advantageous methods of finding a home, and come to grips with the apparently labyrinthine mechanisms of refugee procedures. This ever-expanding knowledge and know-how makes daily life in the host country increasingly easier on the one hand, and is relayed, via the network of connections, to those staying at home to influence migration-related views and facilitate making plans for any possible moves towards migration, reducing hazards related to such a decision, on the other. The later one plans to migrate, the easier the decision-making process and the implementation of the decision arrived at will be made by the information obtainable via the network of connections, not to speak of the financial assistance that might also be forthcoming.

Studying the migration-related networks of information will facilitate forming a more comprehensive and more complex picture of the migration process. It will enable us to avoid making generalising interpretations, often heard in Hungary, according to which the explanation of the increasing migration of the Roma is reducible to one single cause, whether it be of a social, political or economic nature.

When examining a particular case the right thing to do, it appears, is to explore how the network of connections involving those who stay at home is built up, and which elements are to be considered dominant in it. With Roma communities, most networks of connections are organised along familial lines. Irrespective of the principle of descent and the fact that cohabitation can facilitate the formation of ties akin to consanguine connections, it is the closeness of the familial relatedness that determines the quality and intensity of the relationship in most cases (Formoso, 2000: 154–161, Piasere, 1997: 73–89; but cf. Piasere, 1997: 54–56).

In an urban environment the Roma live dispersed over several districts, and yet they possess up-to-the-moment information on each other's lives, often engage in economic activities together, celebrate their feats together, discuss and attempt to solve their problems together. Despite maintaining a diversity of connections with their environment, they have mostly managed to retain the integrity of their group (Hajnal, 1999: 84–87).

Without contradicting the above, it is also to be remarked that examining the principle upon which Roma communities are constructed one will find that factors other than those of descent may play a vital part in fostering communal ties. These include a shared place of residence, a common language or a similar lifestyle (Prónai, 2000: 56). Such a description of communities applies to the community under investigation here, especially in Canada, where a shared place of residence and a common language play a very important role without diminishing the significance of familial ties.

Members of this community have been emigrating to Canada since 1998; though at a changing rate of frequency, the families are leaving for Canada continuously. Constantly weighing the chances of emigration and discussing and evaluating the situation of family members already in Canada have become a central issue for the members of the community staying at home. Emigration appears to be as an increasingly realistic and feasible option and a way of making a living, especially for the young.

There might be numerous reasons for the idea of emigrating to emerge in a given family. One reason can be desperate poverty, a cause of which can be identified in employment discrimination including overt racism on the part of the population at large or the authorities, together with the conflicts deriving from such discrimination. Other reasons may include the protection of the interests of the younger generation; escape from the conse-

quences of some smaller or larger crime committed; or else the accumulation of the family's debts, or simply the desire to live a better life.

> "There are many who wish to leave, because somebody comes up with the idea in the family and then the others want to join him. If the idea occurs to one who has done fairly well here, too, then it is only natural that such relatives and relatives of relatives should want to join him as has been dependent on his help and his tips. These people hope that things will be much the same there, too." (From an interview with A. T. Roma caterer. Budapest, spring 2000)

The circumstances suggesting the idea of leaving the country amplify each other and work together until they lead to the actual move of emigration, and the lesser the hazards involved are, the more likely it is that the reasons listed above will become sufficient to motivate putting the decision into practice. And then the risks tend to diminish in time due to the information incessantly conveyed along the networks of connections and to the increasing assistance actually available.

The families communicate with each other on a daily basis: as telephone rates in Canada are low, hours-long phone-calls are not infrequent. In that way a large number of those staying at home are informed of the daily lives, down to the smallest detail, lived by the emigrants. Members of the separated parts of the communities can sometimes meet each other in person, too. Male members of two families regularly go to Toronto to visit with their relatives there; several families have come back to Hungary on one occasion each before returning to Canada for good.

Settling down in Canada requires help as early as the period preceding the journey itself. The first difficulties arise when letters of invitations bearing an official stamp have to be procured. What makes carrying a letter of invitation so important is the fact that in the absence of a certain amount of spending money the family may not be allowed to board the plane by the Hungarian authorities or they might be returned from a transit airport for the same reason. Of course scraping together the air fare can in itself be a challenge for a family with several children. By now these problems have become relatively easy to solve. Among the members of the community living in Canada there are now two who one can turn to with these problems. They left Hungary more than three years ago, and have been able to establish fairly extensive connections, speak English, and are familiar with official proceedings. They have established ties with Canadian travel agencies from where they can procure letters of invitation conforming to formal requirements and air tickets on credit. This means that the tickets bearing the name of the would-be immigrant are issued, without cash changing hands, to the intermediary, who guarantees that the new arrival will pay for the flight out of the 'starting-line money'. There is another way of obtaining letters of invitation, too, for example from friends or acquaintances of Canadian citizenship.

The first difficulty after the flight awaits the newcomers at the airport when they have to check in with the official of the Immigration and Refugee Board. The families have to state whether they wish to enter Canada as refugees, together with their reasons for doing so. It is important that the statement meet certain requirements as it cannot be deviated from in any significant way during the forthcoming procedures. Information on formal and

essential requirements can be obtained in Hungary already, and in possession of such information it is easier to make a statement which can improve one's chances of receiving a favourable decision. It has also become fairly widely known that it is advisable to obtain, via informal channels if need be, certain official (or official-looking) documents before departure. Such documents can come in handy in the proceedings later. After the often hours-long procedure of registering with the authorities, those without anybody to meet them will be helped by the officials of the immigration board, but today most newcomers are met by relatives (or possibly friends) at the airport. A representative of the family receiving the new arrival has to make a statement to the effect that they are able to provide appropriate circumstances for their guests until the first welfare benefits begin to arrive. Newcomers thus are spared having to begin their new lives at a refugee centre, even if they are obliged to waive the spending money payable to the residents of the shelters.

There is always someone among those already living in Canada to help one during the first few weeks. He will drive the newcomers to the various offices where they can apply for the documents and permits required for the new life; the helper will also try to find the best lawyer to represent the new arrival in the refugee hearings. Further, he will help rent a flat and purchase essentials. Helpers know of the furniture warehouses belonging to charitable associations as well as the churches where furniture, pots and pans, clothes, carpets or tinned food are sometimes distributed. They will go to the slaughterhouse or a large shopping mall to buy meat to be stockpiled in the refrigerator. Almost every relative tries to help make the flat cosier: either by giving a lick of sanitary paint to the walls or removing the furniture, cleaning and embellishing the rooms. Thanks to all this help, a newly arrived family will be settled in a fully furnished and well-equipped flat with the children enrolled in school and the parents perhaps employed in some job six or eight days before receipt of the first welfare check.

Of course, every form of help may have to be repaid, which can take any form from voluntary help to the reimbursement of thousands of dollars in instalments, depending on the closeness of familial or friendly connections between the new arrivals and their helpers. Without unselfish or financially motivated help many families would be unable to grapple with the difficulties arising in the first phase of immigrant life.

In what is to follow, I demonstrate the role and functioning of the network of connections in the practice of migration. The families to be introduced belong to the community under examination (names are withheld with only the degree of family relationship to be given as identification).

The starting point is Ego, who lives in Toronto with his family.

Ego's family spent a longer period of time in Northern Europe in the early 1990s as refugees. Ego's brother-in-law, and the father-in-law of Ego's one brother were employed as guest-workers in Germany for a while. Several families went to Canada in early 1998, arriving a few weeks after the other. The family of Ego's brother was the first to arrive to be followed by the brother's father-in-law and his family. Initially, they stayed at a refugee shelter and then rented a flat together. Today they are living in separate flats but in the same housing development, within a few hundred metres of each other. The men tend to work on the same construction sites, a venture depending largely on the father-in-law who is a skilled-worker with years of experience under his belt (the only family member with a

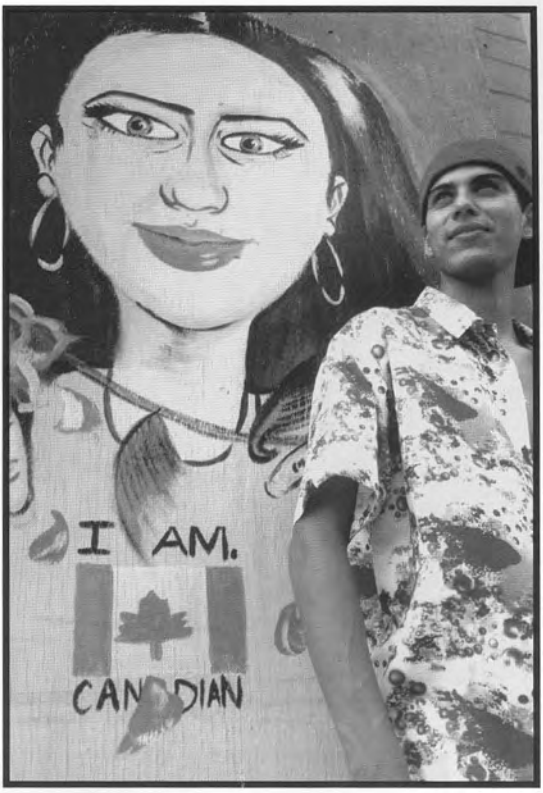
trade). Ego arrived in the same period to be followed by his wife and three children two months later, together with his sister and mother. They all began their new life at the refugee shelter, from where they moved into a rented flat. In the first period, Ego supported a sister widowed in Hungary regularly and in a variety of ways. Ego's mother is single and an old-age pensioner who does not rent a flat of her own, but lives now with one daughter, now with the other and often enjoys the hospitality of her sons, too. Ego's brother-in-law came over with his family one month after Ego's arrival. Having spent a few months in Canada one or two years earlier, the brother-in-law was fairly familiar with conditions prevailing in the country. In the first few weeks they stayed with some old friends from Hungary, who had also arrived, in 1997, as refugees, and were already renting a flat of their own. The brother-in-law and his family enjoyed their friends' hospitality until receipt of the first welfare payments, when they moved into a flat rented by themselves. Roughly at the same time did Ego's brother arrive with his wife and three children. They started their lives here at a refugee shelter and then rented a flat in Toronto.

Faced with temporary difficulties, Ego's brother returned, together with his family, to Hungary in late 1998, but deeming his situation there hopeless, came to Canada once again and has been living there since the summer of 1999.

The cousin of Ego's wife came to Canada in late 1998 with his family. They had lived in Eastern Hungary; the man had worked in the construction industry first as a skilled worker and then as an entrepreneur. He had borrowed money, had an argument about the settling of the account, and than thought he had better leave Hungary. His decision was greatly facilitated by the encouragement of his cousin (Ego's wife). He and his family lived at a refugee centre, but Ego did much to help him make a new start. Currently he works in the construction industry under a Hungarian contractor; he lives in a small town in the same street as Ego's family. In early 1999 the former wife of Ego's brother arrived with her daughter. After her divorce, the woman did not remarry, but maintained close ties with her former husband's family back in Hungary, too. Later the Canadian members of the family unanimously decided, with special regard to the daughter, that the single-parent family stood little chance of fending for itself in Hungary so they suggested that they come to Canada. On their arrival, Ego represented them with the authorities and initially they stayed with Ego's, later to rent a flat of their own. Currently they live near the relations on welfare and occasional employment in Toronto.

In the meantime, Ego's cousins came over to visit with relatives in the summer of 1999. Leaving their women at home, they arrived with their sons, married with children themselves, in Canada, where they spent almost a month. They are well-to-do merchants in Hungary. They have been thinking of emigrating for quite some time in order to start a business in Canada with capital imported from Hungary. Most of their time in Canada they spent on exploring business opportunities travelling around, meeting and talking to many people. Of course they visited all the friends and relatives, too. They spent the longest time staying with Ego's brother-in-law, who rented a flat in downtown Toronto at the time. Although these families had not made up their minds to make the move, and had been living in Hungary up to the time of this research project, the issue of emigration was constantly on the agenda of family discussions.

At the time this research was conducted, in late 2000, another cousin of Ego's wife arrived. He brought his wife, three children and a foster child. They also came from Eastern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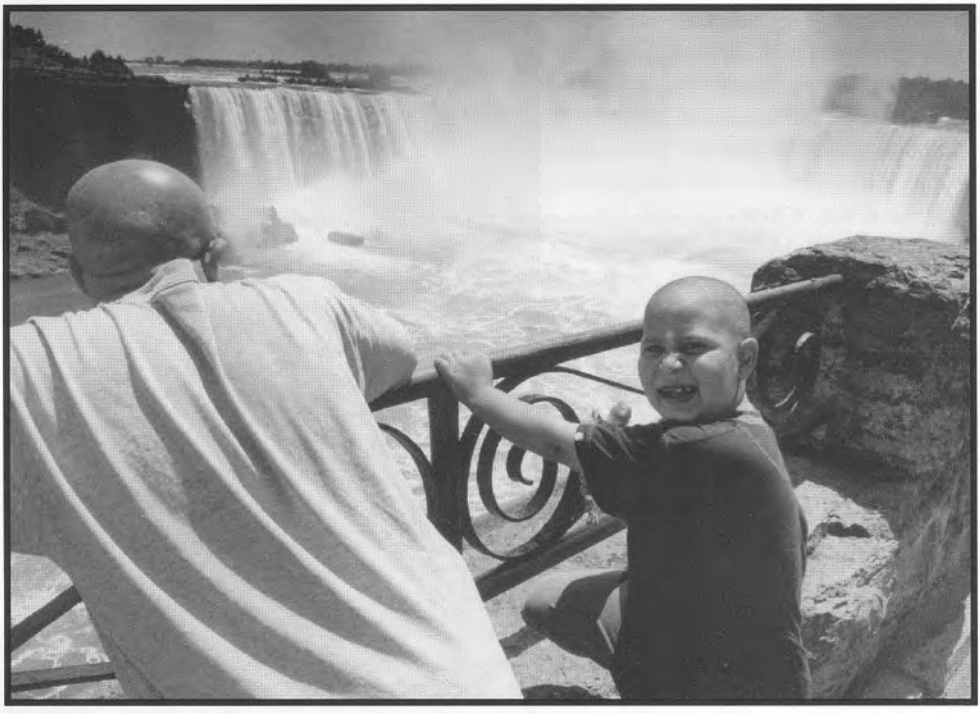


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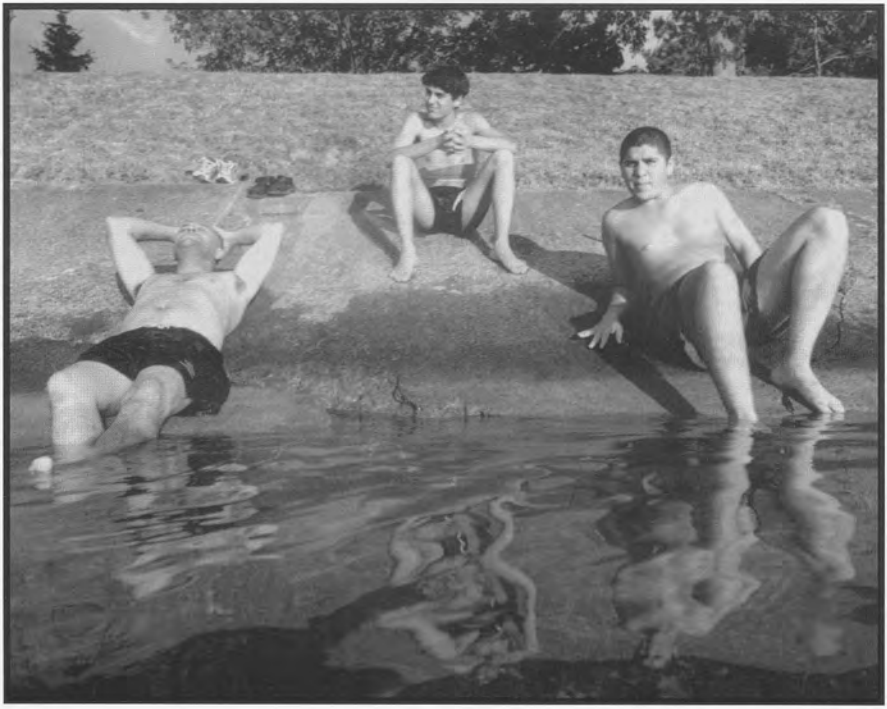


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Hungary, greatly influenced in their decision to emigrate by the man's brother, with whom he had been working in the construction industry for a long time and who helped them after their arrival in Canada. They met the family at the airport with their car, and a few hours after the official procedures the new arrivals were already recovering from the exhaustion of the flight in family circle. They did not have to go to a refuge shelter as they could spend the first few weeks with his brother, to rent a flat nearby on receipt of the first welfare payment. It was also the relatives who helped with obtaining clothes, furniture, a car and enrolling the children in school as well as attending to the matter of official documents. Within two weeks of their arrival, the head of the family was employed next to his brother, who is planning to start a family business as an independent contractor himself.

During my stay in Canada, the families surveyed above were directly involved in emigration (with relatives living in Hungary and only considering emigration mentioned in passing only).

With his family and the families of two cousins, Ego lives in the same street of the same town, where they often see each other and work together. Similarly, Ego's brother and his family live on the same housing development in Toronto where his father-in-law and his family have their flat, and the men work together. Also in Toronto, and practically side by side, live Ego's mother, his brother-in-law and family, Ego's other brother and family, and his sister with her daughter.

Wherever they live, all the families get together on a weekly basis and call each other by phone every day. Besides that, every family maintains close ties with relations in Hungary, conducting hours-long telephone conversations.

In sum, family ties form an essential part of the network of connections in the new environment and in the period of the community's life investigated here, exerting a great influence on everyday living and the practice of migration alike. The community's marriage customs are to be mentioned in this connection, too. These display endogamous characteristics in Hungary, despite the fact that many of the men are married to Romungro women. The pattern seems, on the basis of the few examples, to have remained unchanged in Canada, too. The head of one family had to leave Canada permanently. His deserted wife moved in, together with her and the man's child, with her brother's brother-in-law, and the three of them now live in a flat rented together. The head of a family living in Welland is planning to bring 'decent Gypsy girls' from Hungary for his sons to marry. I am not aware of any non-Gypsy outsider marrying into any of the Roma families.

Emigrant families can get in touch with Hungarians already settled down in Canada. Hungarian businessmen occasionally go to the refugee shelters in search of cheap and usually temporary labour among the Roma families. The chief contractor employing the skilled workers is often himself a first or second-generation Canadian citizen of Hungarian descent. Those seeking employment often advertise themselves in Hungarian-language newspapers published in Toronto. They can establish connections of this sort after moving into their own homes, as there have been Hungarians living in and around Toronto for more than a hundred years, so Hungarian talk is often heard in public. The families in my acquaintance also had connections of this sort. Sometimes they looked up Hungarian-looking names in the telephone directory, and although such attempts at making acquaintances met with varying success, downright rebuttal hardly ever occurred. As his name itself suggests, the family of Welland's mayor is of Hungarian origin, too. Although he no longer speaks

any Hungarian, he has been extremely helpful with the Roma families in his town trying to solve their problems. He is often looked up in his office by those in need of assistance.

Of the various department houses and outlets those are preferred which have Hungarian-speaking employees; of the churches the Roma turn to those where the minister is of Hungarian descent and still speaks some Hungarian. The women baked pastry sold in a grocery owned by a person of Hungarian background, and it was also here that they could do shopping on credit. I knew two families which had kept in touch with old-age pensioners of Hungarian descent living on their own and often requiring assistance. In both cases connections were maintained on a daily basis with frequent mutual visits, shared meals and feasts, the Roma women helping to clean the house or do the shopping for which services those thus helped out were ready to pay. The major attraction of such connections, besides the friendship and the material gain, is the ease of verbal communication, and the reassuring sense of the Roma being able to maintain ties with genuine Canadian citizens.

I saw very few instances of Roma from different countries keeping in touch with each other, even though there were opportunities to establish such connections. That is especially true for Toronto where the Roma Community and Advocacy Centre[12] arranges gatherings and feasts to assemble Roma communities from various Eastern European countries. The issue of the Roma sense of identity requires further in-depth enquiries. The families making a new beginning in Canada have the opportunity to live and express themselves as Hungarians from Hungary and as Roma from Hungary alike, but whereas the relations with the Boyash and the Romungro of the Hungarian community are dominated by the Vlach Gypsy identity, with Roma of Czech, Romanian or Macedonian origins it is the transnational side of the Roma identity which may serve as the basis of the sense of belonging together. In daily communication all these variants can be observed, their constellation depending on momentary interests.

It is a question to what extent these public, externally displayed, modalities of self-definition effect the internal self-representation of the community, and to what extent they are to be regarded as no more than strategies applied in order to make life easier and preserve the integrity of the group (cf. Williams, 2000b: 188–89).

In view of language-related difficulties, it is only natural that connections maintained with non-Hungarian speaking Canadians should be the least usual. Beyond communicating with the authorities, it was members of the neighbourhood community that would appear to be the easiest to establish connections with, and yet this is far from being characteristic. Not even among school-age children, where language means a far smaller obstacle, is mutual fraternising a common phenomenon.

In conclusion, and in accord with the introduction, it is to be emphasised again that what I have attempted to introduce, and in part interpret, are a few characteristics of a process that started no more than four or five years ago. That the legal status of most of the emigrant families was as yet unsettled at the time this research was conducted set the conditions of these enquiries.

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[12] Based in Toronto, the Roma Community and Advocacy Centre (RCAC) organises various cultural events and offers advice to refugees arriving in the province of Ontario. It also publishes the multi-lingual magazine *Romano Lil*, and maintains a web-site at http://romani.org/toronto.

The long-term effects of migration on the Roma culture would be hard to predict today. However that might be, I am convinced that it was a privilege to be present at the emergence and transformation of a community, and to try to record the characteristics resulting from radical environmental and social changes in the life of its members.

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„It's Got to Go Throught"[1]

A Case Study

By Gábor Miklósi

In June 2000 we saw Roma families from Zámoly, then in December further Roma families from Mosonmagyaróvár, Veszprém and Battonya, boarding buses headed for the West, in the hope of starting a new life somewhere else under conditions of legal and financial security. The silent majority of emigrants, however, do not choose Europe as a new place of abode. By the end of the year, the number of would-be emigrants addressing Canadian immigration officers with „I'm a refugee", the words which meant admission into the country, had reached an average of ten a day. Between January and September 2000 Canadian authorities found 228 applications for refugee status submitted by Roma well-founded enough to confer rights to refugee status because of the applicants' fear of persecution in Hungary. The sight of a continuous stream of Roma fleeing the country can now be set beside the view of the famous Chain Bridge illuminated by night lights, and the sight of impressive industrial parks in the official tabloid image of the country.

„It's got to go through" – Maria whispers anxiously as we walk back into the court room. It takes us rather a long search to find the room we need among the great number of identical-looking plasterboarded rooms along the corridors on the umpteenth floor of the Immigration and Refugee Board, housed in the Toronto government building. The corridors and lounges are filled with refugees from all four corners of the world, interpreters, attorneys and board members. Some of them are looking for the rooms in which they are supposed to deliver their next decisions, some of them for the room in which they will be decided about. The break is over and Maria's hearing, for which she has been waiting for half a year, is about to be resumed. What is to be decided is the crucial question whether she will get refugee status and the immigration visa. I do not have the heart to tell her the sobering news which I have just received from her legal representative: the likelihood of her success in convincing the two-strong committee is very slim because she has „a very thin story" and no evidence.

Before the break, Maria (who asked to keep her real name secret) told me that she used to work at the Internal Medicine Ward of a hospital in the country but her situation became more and more untenable. There were continuous protests from patients objecting to a gypsy nurse administering injections and drugs to them. They were afraid she might want to harm them. She tells me there were never any objections to the way she did her

[1] This article was published in *Élet és irodalom* (Life and Literature), January 19, 2001.

job. Her bosses had defended her or some time, but when several new nurses came to the hospital at the same time, the air around her soon grew thin. After some time the matron asked her to leave, saying her presence was undermining the reputation of the hospital. Maria told her she was considering making a complaint at the hospital director. In response to this, the matron threatened her with a disciplinary dismissal, to which Maria, a young woman who is somewhat ignorant of the intricacies of labour law but with a sense of pride and dignity, responded by never going to work again. As a result of this, she has no papers, i.e. evidence of the way in which her employment came to be terminated.

During the break Lisa Winter-Card, the young attorney who represents Maria, told us that almost all Hungarian applicants try to support their application by claiming that they are Roma who have experienced persecution at home. She thinks there are several problems with Maria's case. Maria made no attempt to fight for her rights, and one of the crucial questions to be scrutinised in the course of the refugee procedure in Canada is the question whether or not the applicant tried to take recourse to all the legal remedies available in his or her country. Whether the case of persecution is supported by straightforward evidence is the key consideration in the decision about applications. Persecution is defined not only as undue restriction of a normal existence imposed by government institutions but also as the lack of governmental protection against discrimination on the part of local majority society and the impossibility of availing oneself of legal redress for personal grievances. The fact that Maria did not wait until she was dismissed, failed to seek redress at a labour court and made no attempt to find employment in another hospital weakens her case. At the same time Winter-Card is aware of the fact that the anti-Roma attitude is fairly evenly spread throughout Hungary and that, as a result, Maria was unlikely to be accepted by other hospitals. In fact, she was going to use this fact in her argument during the procedure which would follow the break.

Most Hungarian refugees arrive at the hearing much better prepared than Maria was. They try not only to document their personal grievances but also mention the general tendency to denigrate Roma and particular instances of discrimination. Most of them complain about the breaches of law committed by the police and local authorities, the segregation in neighbourhoods, the discrimination at work and the antipathy, hatred and racism on the part of the majority population. Attorneys and legal aid agencies in Toronto keep records of several cases which have never been revealed to Hungarian legal defence organisations. The Hungarian file at the research unit of the IRB has been continuously updating its Hungarian file, with special attention and care since January 2000. Within the short span of time between January and November 2000, Hungary came to rank third after Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the number of refugees arriving in Canada. Most of them were children and young persons, and there were over twice as many below thirty than above. According to data published by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship of Canada, a monthly average of 135 applications for refugee status were submitted by Hungarian citizens until August, but their numbers soared to 290 a month before November was over. In other words, an average of ten Hungarians were seeking refugee status with Canadian authorities every day, with 1884 Hungarian applications registered between January and late November.

The sudden increase in the number of refugees seems to be the latest chapter in the history of a process which has lasted several years, rather than a work of mere chance.

There was a sense that Canadian authorities might be considering the introduction of administrative restrictions as a result of the increasing number of refugee applications from Hungary as early as 1998. It would have been reasonable for Ottawa to re-introduce the compulsory visa system as it did in response to the sudden increase in Roma migration from the Czech Republic. But the step was not taken, presumably as a result of the lively economic relations between the two countries and of Canadian respect for the interests of the influential Hungarian community in Canada. What happened instead was and has ever since been unique in the history of Canadian immigration policy: two families were chosen for 'lead cases', with witnesses summoned from Hungary in November 1998. IRB spokesman Philip Palmer says the arrangement of lead cases was a result of a long process and was designed both to make work simpler and easier for committee members – so that they would not have to go through the details of the situation in Hungary in each individual instance – and to 'establish legal trends'.

Following a hearing of the Hungarian witnesses (András Biró, human rights activist; Flórián Farkas, President of the National Gypsy Self-Government; Lipót Höltzl, then under-secretary of the Ministry of Justice; and Jenő Kaltenbach minority ombudsman) the applications of the 'model families' were rejected in January 1999. This was followed by a sharp decline in the number of applications which were found well-supported and granted. While in 1998 Canadian authorities found claims of persecution sufficiently supported by evidence in 153 out of 217 applications assessed, the records for 1999 reveal 74 positive decisions out of 448 cases.

A number of attorneys dealing with Hungarian refugees maintained that IRB was not entitled to arrange for lead cases. Lisa Winter-Court told us that, unlike the Canadian legal system, the refugee procedure is not based on precedent, as a result of which it was not legitimate to refer to previous cases when adjudicating about a case in hand. "It was unfair to set up the lead cases", she complains, "because the families' representatives lacked sufficient resources to call witnesses." Rosco Galati, another attorney from Toronto, thinks the fact that the arbitrators (committee members) appointed for the pre-selected lead cases had no experience in Hungarian cases clearly indicates that the two lead cases were a mere show. IRB spokesman Philip Palmer claims the selection of members with no experience in Hungarian matters was designed exactly to free judgement in the cases of any bias that might result from previous experience. He added that the applicants had also been entitled to call witnesses, but, as it happened, not all of the witnesses called did, in fact, turn up. Rosco Galati went further than complaining: he lodged an appeal against the lead cases in which he requested that they should be abrogated. After the Federal Court allowed the appeal to be submitted in March 2000, Galati went on to sue the Federal Government. He made the following passionate statement in his Toronto office: "I will sue the government and IRB in the name of a group for a crime against humanity. The same applies to the Hungarian officials who would deserve to be put to jail for giving a distorted description of the Hungarian situation in their testimonies. One has to be in a coma to fail to see the problems the Roma are facing in Hungary." After sending out subpoenas to the administrators who made the arrangements for the lead cases, a general state of panic broke out at IRB, he claims.

The attorneys think the new turn of the tide in the adjudication of Hungarian applications was a direct result of these subpoenas. In early July, 2000 a family of seven were

granted refugee status in Toronto. What makes their case unique is the fact that while in the previous period positive decisions – or at least those that became public – were made in cases involving personal insult to the applicants backed by straightforward evidence, this family complained of the general situation. Yasmeen Siddiqui, a member of the committee, took the pains to do what no one had done for one and a half years: he examined, item by item, the observance of human rights in Hungary. In his argument for the decision he maintained that new and convincing evidence had come to light since the conclusion of the lead cases, which made it seem very likely that applicants who had been staying in Canada since 1997 would be exposed to further persecution if they returned to Hungary. The decision made in July can now be seen to have acted as another 'lead case': the number of applications ending with a positive decision has risen again significantly, with 91 positive decisions out of 568 applications (16%) from January to late June as opposed to 137 out of 290 between July and September (47%). Now apparently on the increase, this tendency toward admission is likely to stimulate the emigration wave which can be expected in the autumn.

The emigration wave, by now a true exodus, is perhaps the most desperate manifestation of the frustration which has accumulated in the Roma population in the past few decades as a result of their unwanted status of the outcast and the ignored. In Canada, as opposed to Hungary, there is hardly a trace of an anti-gypsy attitude. There are jobs for everyone and liberal refugee regulations which allow even applicants with a rejected application to stay on and work for one and a half or two years. Of course, the exorbitant air fare reduces the numbers from, or rather before, the start: Roma at the poorer end of the income scale, poorly informed and mostly living in the country can only target the European Union, a destination which is not particularly friendly to refugees, while Canada remains a realistic destination only for the Roma who have some savings, are better informed – typically the musician gypsies and their families. An emigration fever has broken out among young urban gypsies with no strong attachments to the place where they live, fuelled – as conversations reveal – to varying degrees by bitterness about their fate as well as curiosity. With no systematic research to date, no one knows the personal and communal grievances and motivations behind the tendency for emigration. That there are such motives and grievances and that they are strong can be read off the numbers.

At the trial, the Hungarian refugees who claim to be Roma have to prove three things: that they are of gypsy origins, that they are trustworthy and that their grievances qualify as persecution. The attorneys confirm the fact the refugees complain about: there are many people who are not Roma but pretend to be with reference to make-believe stories of persecution, and are accorded refugee status. The right to a free choice of identity is among the fundamental rights secured by the Hungarian Constitution but a gypsy exposed to persecution can only be one who is treated as a gypsy by the majority population. If an applicant does not look a Roma, he or she is likely to be less exposed to insults and atrocities in Hungary, so the weight of his or her application and trustworthiness is impaired.

Seeing the colour of Maria's skin I had not expected any doubts to be entertained about her origins, yet the committee takes nothing for granted. Maria has to answer a lot of questions. How do Hungarians recognise her as a gypsy? What language did they speak at home? What did her parents and grandparents do for a living? Where do they keep her father's violin? What Roma groups live in Hungary? Maria does her best to answer every

question patiently, but the questioners have difficulties in understanding, which is made worse by occasional mistranslations on the interpreter's part. Slowly but perhaps inevitably Maria becomes impatient. She does not understand why she has to explain for the fifth time that she is recognised in Hungary as a gypsy firstly because her skin is dark and secondly, because she speaks Hungarian. This immediately makes the committee think she might not be a Roma, after all. What does she mean they recognise her as a gypsy because she speaks Hungarian? I often get the feeling that I could set the hearing back into the right course with one single word of explanation, but the rules forbid me to speak. At last, it dawns on the interpreter and the committee: she means she could be identified as a foreigner by the colour of her skin, but the moment she speaks Hungarian she is recognised as a Roma.

Maria makes no attempt to add anything to the hospital story that would make it more impressive. Her terse narrative reveals a sense of lingering bitterness about the way her humanity and professional ability were put in question. I would like to encourage her to give as many details of her humiliating experiences as she can think of, knowing that the committee is expecting her to do just that, and the attorney is obviously asking her a series of questions with that precise aim in mind, but Maria obstinately declines to give a vivid report of her ordeal and sticks to the dry facts. Her attorney tells me later that it was unwise to do so because sometimes what sounds like a hopeless case turns out to be good enough if it is appropriately 'embellished'. She recalls the case of a family who had gone to Hungary from Transylvania and later, before the IRB, complained of the Hungarians' dislike of Transylvanian refugees and their irritating habit of simply branding them as 'Romanians', which made their situation in Hungary impossible to bear. "I can hardly remember a more hopeless case, our chances were next to none", Lisa Winter-Card recalls. "One of the committee members finally started questioning their pretty little fair-haired daughter, who told them, with tears in her eyes, how she was scoffed at by her schoolmates, after which the hearing was soon declared closed and the family was granted refugee status. By contrast, there was a family of dark-skinned Roma, whose neighbours would set their dogs on the little gypsy boys. You could see the marks left in their legs by the missing tissue, and still they were refused." – the attorney adds, with indignation.

Canada's recognition of the gravity of grievances suffered by Hungarian citizens in their home country without effective protection from their own government is obviously a strain for Hungarian-Canadian relations. The presence of a great number of refugees posing a budgetary problem to Ottawa and meaning a loss of prestige to Budapest, the question that immediately springs to mind is to what extent politics is able to influence decisions in refugee law. IRB was originally set up as an independent body for decision making on refugee applications and, in principle at least, it seems to be unaffected by influence from the powers that be. This is something about which Rosco Galati has serious doubts. He thinks that the fact that committee members are appointed for definite periods and that the extension of appointments depends upon the members' performance, guarantee exactly the possibility of external influence. As members' salaries are high by Canadian standards, most of them try to swim with the current, i.e. live up to the expectations they think they are supposed to fulfil. „How else could one explain the sudden turns in decision preferences?", Galati argues. Anthony Iozzo, an expert at the Immigration Ministry thinks the trends one can discern in decisions over time are not due to political influence. They are

rather to be put down to the fact that the members read each other's decisions, and that convincing, lucid arguments have an influence on their own decisions. Whatever inconsistencies are open to criticism are caused by 'the human factor'. What the assessment forms reveal is that decisions are not appraised in terms of rightness or precision. Iozzo claims that the liberality of Canadian asylum policy is taken advantage of by many and the committee cannot be certain of the rightness of their decisions since they cannot „see what is in the applicant's head".

I have similar thoughts wandering through my mind, trying to guess what is in the heads of the two arbitrators while they, from time to time, nod their heads in response to the attorney's final speech. Maria's reserved attitude does not seem to have done her much harm: used to more colourful stories, the committee members have no doubts about her trustworthiness. After a few minutes' consultation they decide to adjourn the hearing for a month, during which Maria is supposed to acquire some sort of document which records the exact circumstances of her dismissal from the hospital. The expression on Maria's face, which tells me she finds this promising, is in stark contrast to the air of indifference with which the members collect their files and to the disappointment in the attorney's eyes as she stares in front of herself.

Gypsy Musicians

by Ernő Kállai

Widely considered as an aristocracy within the gypsy population, gypsy musicians have played an important part in Hungarian cultural life. Gábor Mátray, the renowned musical historian of the 19th century writes about them in the following terms of appreciation (although, it must be admitted, he could not always detach himself from contemporary public opinion on the gypsies):

> "The distinguished musician achieves respect and earns himself a reputation which will live for centuries, but similarly, the outstanding folk musician of loudly applauded popular performances who, rising from what may be the humblest of origins, also refines his artistic talent to superb perfection in his kind of artistic skill and deserves not only the appreciation of his contemporaries (especially in his own country to which he has devoted his long years of noble service) but may equally expect to be kept in remembrance long after the last breath has left his lips." (Mátray, 1984a: 288)

The world of gypsy musicians has recently undergone profound changes in terms of lifestyle and musical genre: while playing Hungarian popular songs ('magyar nóta') in restaurants as a way of making a living is almost extinct, an increasing number of musicians of gypsy origins are active in classical music and jazz, and bands which play authentic gypsy music have been gaining in popularity.

In the first part of my study I offer a brief and sketchy survey of the past of gypsy musicians, of their role until the mid-1900s.

In the second part I rely on an analysis of nine interviews conducted for the purposes of the migration research project with a view to giving a picture of the present situation of musicians (their social stratification, their interest in employment abroad and the role of factors which are linked with the latter such as access to information, media consumption, circumstances and organisation of travelling etc).

The account here given will finally be complemented by the abridged and edited version of an interview made with one of the musicians, which is reproduced in the *Appendix*.

"ALL THIS IS JUST EXSTASY OR A DREAM, AT MOST"[1]

Attentive research has shown that the idea that gypsies are born for music and that they brought this activity from India as their ancient trade is just another myth.[2] The gypsies settled in Hungary in the 14–15th century and the first sources to mention a few gypsy musicians date back to the 16th and the 17th. Contemporary records in Western Europe show no trace of music being the primary or dominant source of living among the gypsies; on the contrary, they clearly indicate that gypsies were making their living as smiths and practitioners of other handicrafts. It seems all the more surprising, therefore, that records relating to the late 18th century should all of a sudden start speaking of gypsy musicians winning their bread by playing in bands as professional entertainers. Usually considered the first lead violinist in a gypsy band, Panna Czinka (1711–1772) is recorded to have often helped her husband in the smithery beside her musical activity, and he, in turn, sometimes appeared in her band, and later, with the demand for musical entertainment growing, he could even pursue music as his only profession.

> "The regular resident gypsy is not only a son of Vulcanus [i.e. a smith] but also of Apollo, and is the musician of the locality, and many of them are virtuosi beyond all doubt. (Quoted from the personal records of Gedeon Ács by Mezey, 1986: 64)

But the real turning point in the life of gypsy musicians – one that gave them better opportunities not only to make a living but also to rise on the social ladder – came with the advent of the musical genre called 'verbunkos', or recruiting song, which appeared as part of the process of national awakening and became the dominant musical genre for a long time. Originally, *verbunkos* – meaning persuasion or recruitment – was a dance to be performed by men, which was danced in the Habsburg Empire in public places to persuade young men to join the army by representing a soldier's life as adventurous and enjoyable. It was a common scene in the Habsburg empire in the period from the organisation of the standing mass army to the introduction of universal conscription. As dancing without music is of little appeal, there emerged a growing need for people who could play the music well enough to enliven the occasion, and rich people began to demand this new kind of musical performance as an accompaniment to their occasions of entertainment. Records from this period testify that some of the gypsies were having a hard time trying to combine the provision of their newly demanded services with the continuation of their old trades.

> „What is even more pressing, I had to serve the recruiting soldiers by playing the violin. And that means, as if to make my poor condition worse still, that I cannot do my own job. It took until Advent till I could stop, and now I am wanted to present for that service again... In addition, the noblemen want me to serve them when the time comes." (Kozi Vadász, a gypsy from the town of Miskolc in 1781, quoted by Tóth, 1994:52)

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[1] The motto taken from the diary of the young Count Széchenyi is quoted – after Szabolcsi – by Sárosi (1998: 370).

[2] There are several studies which address the issue, e.g. Havas, 2000.

All these developments were partly a result of the strong demand for a specifically Hungarian style in music which was a defining feature of the process developing national consciousness and culture. In the world west of our country the period of musical history called Viennese Classicism was at its most thriving, with giants such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven at the peak of their creativity. Somewhat rudimentary at the time, Hungarian musical culture was waiting for a revolutionary transformation, and gypsy musicians were to become the main carriers of this movement.

Another explanation for the change that occurred in the status of gypsies was, according to the oft-cited statement of Bálint Sárosi:

> "...the rise of gypsies to dominance in music for entertainment was greatly facilitated by society's condescending and depreciating attitude to the entertainers themselves. What was self-humiliation and a come-down in the eyes of those attached with close ties to society was the best way of getting into society and a suitable form of self-assertion to someone in their circumstances of life. By the end of the 18th century, with the first successful performances of their bands, the gypsies had attained to the stage at which playing music (as opposed to working the iron in a smith's workshop) now counted as the most prestigious and attractive trade for them." (Sárosi, 1971:55[3])

The social recognition that resulted from this development was to cost gypsy musicians a great deal of adaptation and self-discipline since the peculiar idea of 'having a good time' entertained by the Hungarian gentry often exposed gypsy musicians to a variety of humiliating situations and experiences, which they had to tolerate if they were to continue earning their living. For a long time (19th century) restaurant musicians collected their pay by going around the place holding out a plate before them, but paper money drawn through the hair of the violin bow, thrown into the instrument or fastened to the musician's forehead with saliva, were also practices with a long tradition, and some of these have been eternalised in semi-proverbial stock phrases. There were also other common 'jokes', one of which is described by Sárosi:

> "Not infrequently, men in a fit of whim would have the gypsy musicians accompany them to the latrines ... had them stand around the wooden construction, provide musical accompaniment to the goings-on inside and play a flourish of all instruments at the appropriate moment." (Sárosi, 1996: 40)

Gypsy musicians became an increasingly indispensable part of everyday entertainment. The recognition of their musical skills even began to transcend country frontiers:

> „I have heard the Miskolc gypsies playing a few times, and I must admit their music deserves to be highly esteemed. Although not all of them play from scores, they play so well that one completely forgets that he is listening to untutored musicians. Their special strengths show especially in Hungarian dances, but they are also a master of the lament. The gypsies of Miskolc play at every ball and at every restive occasion held in

[3] Sárosi's work can be recommended as the most comprehensive study on gypsy music and gypsies to date.

town, and play rather well; indeed, people throng to hear them. Hence comes the pride we have observed in them, which becomes apparent also in their the way they dress, eat and drink, their manner of speaking, walking and their entire demeanour toward others... Many of them are so educated that we are at a loss: are they real gypsies? Even their black colour has undergone perceptible change." (Jakob Glatz's writing from 1799 quoted by Tóth, 1994:52)

The musicians gradually became the „aristocracy of the gypsies", increasingly moving away from those in other trades and passing their new trade on to their descendants. It is not that they have an innate musical talent; it is that their descendants grow up in an atmosphere of respect for the trade and of hope of a certain living, receiving systematic musical education from an early age. Gábor Mátray, an important musical historian of the period writes:

"Of all our nationalities, the gypsies show the greatest interest in music [...] A gypsy child of only 7 years will start plucking on some instrument, and rises to incredible artistic skill through frequent practice. Except for the clavier, they learn to play practically all the major musical instruments." (Mátray, 1984b: 183)

At the end of the 18th century the number of gypsy musicians appearing in censuses hardly reached 1600, but a hundred years later as many as 17.000 gypsy musicians were recorded in Hungary. Scattered across a social scale from village musicians to the members of well-known bands, these gypsy individuals were the most recognised and most successful members of the entire history of this ethnic group in Hungary, eternalised in the memory of the nation and its written history. Recognising the opportunity offered by Hungarian society and finding the way for them to advance in that society, part of the gypsy population thus became a formative element in Hungarian musical culture. Having won social recognition by the early 19th century, gypsy musicians became carriers of national music and members of the national movement toward a transformation of society toward a bourgeois pattern. The first in a series of great lead violinists and undoubtedly the greatest and most famous one in the Reform Era, János Bihari (1769–1828) was the musician whose work elevated *verbunkos* into to the status of a defining part of the Hungarian musical heritage and gave its name to a period in Hungarian musical history. He was the first gypsy musician whose activity became the centre of a true cult, and also the first of his kind to get rich (although he died poor). According to contemporary records, he was standardly invited to play at balls organised around major political events and his performance was admired at social events as much as in the imperial court, but he was greatly esteemed by figures as outstanding as Franz Liszt, Sándor Kisfaludy and Dániel Berzsenyi, as well. A contemporary, Lajos Evva wrote in 1875:

"...princes and noblemen were as unable to resist the magic of his violin as the poor craftsman's assistant who would throw in his very last wages into the famous gypsy's hat." (Quoted by Sárosi, 1971: 75)

The massive spread of gypsy bands and the appearance of the most famous lead violinists can be dated to the mid-19th century. They accompanied the troops of the Hungarian army in the 1848/49 war of independence and they helped keep the spirit of national resistance alive until as late as the political compromise which was finally struck between Hungary and Austria in 1867. I will mention only a few of them. Ferenc Sárközy (1820–1890) lieutenant to Lajos Kossuth and the chief conductor of gypsy musicians taking part in the war; Károly Boka (1808–1860) lead violinist from the town of Debrecen, who was held in such respect that his funeral was attended by over ten thousand people, or Ferenc Patikárus (1827–1870) who measured musical skills with Pál Rácz Sr. at a competition which was judged by a jury consisting of notables such as Ferenc Erkel, Mihály Mosonyi, Kornél Ábrány, Gábor Mátray and similar great personalities of the era. Although Pál Rácz was awarded only second place, his impact on the audience must have been tremendous if one comes to think of the fact that novelist Mór Jókai modelled the protagonist of his novel *Fekete vér* (Black Blood) after him, and that the popular Hungarian song beginning *The aspen has shed its leaves...* is still widely known today, the song which was played by 120 gypsies at his funeral.

Receiving special attention and support after the defeat of the war of independence, gypsy musicians undertook tours around the country, thus keeping up the spirit of national resistance. By this time, there were entire dynasties of musicians among the gypsy population, and the memory of smithery and other crafts was receding into a distant past. This was also the time of the beginning of the myth according to which such virtuosi cannot but have been musicians from the beginning of time. The gypsy aristocracy was already distinguishing itself from the rest of the gypsy population: it had become inconceivable for an ordinary 'peasant gypsy' to marry into a distinguished family of musicians. The successive generations of musicians were attaining to ever higher levels of dexterity in practising their art, by now the exclusive one. Yet, in spite of all these changes, more and more of them were complaining of a „decline in gypsy music". This is explained by the fact that gypsy musicians, at the new level of previously unthinkable technique, were beginning to incorporate „extraneous elements" into their skill, playing classical music, opera excerpts and medleys, all of which meant a dramatic re-interpretation of the Hungarian *verbunkos* tradition. This is true despite the fact that the genre and the musicians had become such a defining characteristic of musical culture by the late 19th century that many began to think of the Hungarian *verbunkos* and gypsy music as the „original" and „ancestral" Hungarian folk music. Franz Liszt's notorious book *On the Gypsies and Gypsy Music in Hungary*, which proved that *verbunkos* was composed as opposed to unwritten folk music and highlighted its characteristics, set off a debate that occupied the attention of Hungarian society for several years.[4]

The mid-century saw the appearance of a new musical genre, the Hungarian song, also called popular composed song, which drew partly from the *verbunkos* tradition. The social demand which lead to its formation was similar to that which once gave rise to *verbunkos* itself. Members of the upper reaches of society who considered themselves as carriers of a progressive mentality, felt a need for a new, specifically Hungarian musical genre (it must be remarked that Zoltán Kodály's characterisation of the Hungarian song was different:

[4] For more details of the debate see Sárosi, 1998: 352.

"the music of the transitional type of man who has risen above the world of the folk song but has not risen to high culture", quoted by Sárosi, 1971: 137). They needed something that would suit various attitudes, something that would complement and underscore their mood, whether of merriment or sorrow, something they could sing, become a part of, music which they would be able to experience as their very own. It is by no means accidental that Béni Egressy, the composer of the music to *Szózat* (a kind of second national anthem) is considered as the father of the written Hungarian song, the composer who clearly recognised the need for the new genre. These new kinds of songs were typically written by provincial gentry and clerks who could be successful at this musically simple form despite their imperfect musical education. That is how Kálmán Simonffy, chief notary in the town of Cegléd, later a member of Parliament – immodestly referred to as 'the Hungarian Schubert' –, became the first truly successful writer of songs of this kind. He was followed by Elemér Szentirmay, József Dóczy, Loránd Fráter and Árpád Balázs, to mention just the most well-known names. There were also a number of 'one-song composers', since 'a Hungarian gentleman' would feel almost obliged to enrich Hungarian musical culture by putting forth whatever talent lay in him.

According to some estimates, thirty thousand songs of this kind had been composed by the mid-20th century, and gypsy musicians played an indispensable role in introducing them to the public as the impact of these songs had little appeal to the audience without music. It was through the skill and manner of performance characteristic of gypsy musicians that the composed Hungarian song came to conserve, transform and carry on the tradition of *verbunkos*. In the period between the two world wars the genre – and its performers, gypsy musicians – were so popular that musicians became a genuinely indispensable part of everyday life. They were so highly esteemed that some songwriters – who were gentry, clerks, doctors and solicitors rather than gypsies, of course – would take their violin, stand in with gypsy bands and popularise their own compositions with the help of their modest skills as violinists.

Special mention must be made of Pista Dankó (1858–1903) a songwriter of gypsy origins from the town of Szeged, who rose above his contemporaries as the first gypsy musician who achieved historic fame for himself as a songwriter rather than with his skills as a musician. Some of the over four hundred songs he wrote are still popular today, including *My violin has broken...*, *The sun is setting...*, *One pussy, two pussies...* A clear indication of the cult surrounding gypsy musicians is the fact that Dankó's funeral was accompanied by mourning and pomp all around the country and that a statue was erected in his commemoration in the town of Szeged in 1912.

It is also worth recalling a few details about the appearances of gypsy musicians in other countries. Gypsy musicians are recorded to have turned up in the imperial court in Vienna as early as the 1780s and in 1840 their performance in Paris was reported by *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris* in the following words:

> "The two Hungarian musicians and one dancer who call themselves gypsies and arrived in our capital a few days ago gave a magnificent performance on the stage of Vaudeville last Thursday. The musicians got a great applause. One will think of them even more highly if one learns that these strange artists are completely ignorant of the simplest elements of the art of music, and the perfection with which they played their lovely-sounding tunes is a result of their amazing instinct." (Quoted by Csemer, 1994: 16)

From the late 19th century on, famous lead violinists and their bands travelled to almost all countries in the world which were then important, and these musical trips were regularly reported by Hungarian newspapers. Their skills were admired by notable personalities of the age such as the members of the British royal family or the famous composer Claude Debussy. A few gypsy musicians settled down abroad, but most of them looked upon these foreign tours abroad as a way of making more money from which to boost their career at home. In this way they got acquainted with more and more of the musical styles current in other countries at the time, which was instrumental in preparing the ground for the next generation's movement into the area of jazz and classical music, delivering another proof of their traditional readiness to improve, meet new challenges and respond to the changing demands of society. At that time audiences found it strange to hear outlandish tunes in Hungarian concert halls, including Zoltán Kodály himself, who expressed his surprise in the following words in 1925: "I heard an Englishman the other day expressing his surprise at the fact that all he hears from gypsy bands in Budapest is jazz and the song »Why did I kiss that girl?«" (Quoted by Sárosi, 1996: 53).

Gypsy musicians were more or less able to keep up their social status and living standards until the late 20th century. Bálint Sárosi estimates that there were still 7-8000 gypsies playing music professionally in 1968.

GYPSY MUSICIANS TODAY[5]

There are three groups in the present-day society of gypsy musicians, whether professional or amateur. The following sketch of the present-day situation of gypsy musicians will be based on interviews which were conducted with members of the three groups and will be presented partly in terms of migration research. Short biographies of the nine interviewees will be inserted in the presentation.

The musicians who have been interviewed know few people outside their circles. There is even less communication between the groups which play classical music, gypsy music and authentic folk music than between any of them and persons of other ethnic origins, which is probably a result of the completely different lifestyles and interests.

Stratification: groups which play classical music, gypsy music, and authentic folk music

Young people who play classical music. The first great group of musicians consists of young people whose ancestors were performers of the classic gypsy music which grew out of *verbunkos* for several generations but these young people themselves have predominantly received education in classical music. This shift of orientation is a result partly of their own personal inclinations and partly of the influence of their parents. These parents had witnessed the decline of „café music" since the 1980s and almost prohibited their

[5] This part of the present study is based on the author's "Gypsy Musicians and their Opportunities Abroad" which was published in *Mozgó Világ* 2000/10 (Kállai, 2000).

children from any association with gypsy music if their inclination was lead them toward music. This lead to the emergence of a musically highly educated and skilled stratum of young gypsies whose social status is completely different from that of their parents. However, classical musical education in Hungary has been overproductive for several decades now and opportunities to find jobs as members of symphonic orchestras or in teaching are constantly on the decease. As a result, those who cannot find such employment tend to make arrangements and efforts for a career abroad. These young musicians learn German and English and most of them are of the opinion that a musician of some quality can only hope to achieve true professional recognition and material reward only in Western Europe, mainly Germany or Austria, or in the United States.

Biographical Sketch of the Interviewees in the First Group

- 24-year-old man resident in Budapest, married, with one child. Fourth-year student at the Musical College, studying to be a violinist. He comes from a musicians' family with a great past, both his parents and grandparents made their living by playing gypsy music. His father, a clarinettist, did not allow him to turn toward traditional gypsy music, for which he had an inclination as a child, and also prohibited his brother from doing the same, and sent him to piano lessons, instead. He has been learning to play classical music since he was a child, it is his only field of interest. He sometimes goes to international competitions and plays in several well-known symphonic orchestras, as a result of which he often travels abroad. He knows very many gypsy musicians, especially from the same area of classical music. He is learning English hard.
- 23-year-old woman, a resident in Budapest, unmarried, lives with her parents. She is in her third year at the Musical College studying to be a violinist. She comes from a musicians' family of several generations, his father is a lead violinist in a gypsy band. Although her ethnic origins are not apparent from her looks, she does not conceal her identity, but she does not boast about it, either. She usually tells others about her ethnic origins by telling them what his father does. She is learning German and English. She often travels abroad as a member of symphonic orchestras.

Incidentally, this view is not unique to gypsies: symphonic orchestras all around the world, large and small, are full of Hungarian musicians.[6] This is partly due to the fact, as is revealed by stories heard from more and more graduates from the Music Academy, that certain orchestras are reluctant to employ musicians of gypsy descent, which they openly admit to the applicants concerned. They justify their reluctance with reference to the unreliability of gypsies, and if they still take on someone of gypsy origins, they expect complete professional and personal assimilation from him or her.

In the West, musicians are kept in esteem regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. They are given permission to settle down and they can live comfortably with their families even in very small towns. They keep in contact with many foreign musicians, including some Hungarian gypsies who have been working abroad for some time. Touring with the orchestras

[6] Conversations with Italian musicians reveal that there are also many of them working in different countries, for similar reasons.

gives them opportunities to meet, sometimes several times a year. The conversations they have on these occasions, they say, are their best and most reliable source of information about opportunities and circumstances abroad, and this is why they can afford to ignore information given by the mass media, which they think is false.

Elderly musicians playing gypsy music. The second large group is made up of musicians who are well advanced in years, the generation of musicians who were the beneficiaries of the last great flowering of gypsy music in the 1960s and 70s. They used to play 'classic' gypsy music in a traditional folk band, and dance music. They were the 'catering trade musicians' who made a lot of money and were able to save a lot of money. Their salaries were purposefully kept low, but they did not mind because they could make much more from the tips they received from the customers in one night.

Biographic sketch of the interviewees in the second group

- See Appendix (p. 88)
- 58-year-old man living in Pest county. His family has always had something to do with music but they did not do it as a profession. He was the first professional in the family. He used to play as a drummer in dance-bands. He has only daughters so no one in the family followed him in the profession. After the social transformation of 1989 he could no longer find employment as a musician. He worked as an unskilled labourer for a few years, which wrecked him both mentally and physically. Now he lives on disability pension.
- 57-yeaar-old man living in a town in Pest county. He comes from an old musicians' family, plays the contrabass. Starting as a classical musician he travelled to several countries as a member of orchestras in the 1960s. (He has been to almost every country in Europe and several times to the Soviet Union.) Later he chose classic gypsy music, mainly under the influence of his wife who lived in the country, so he decided to leave Budapest and his job there. His financial situation began to get worse as early as the 1980s since there was no longer a need for large gypsy bands, especially in the country. He was able to continue as a bass guitarist in dance-bands for a few years or at Lake Balaton on a-few-month contracts in the summers. After 1989, however, he could never again find employment in his profession. After a few years as an unskilled workman in a factory he was pensioned off owing to his bad nervous state. At the moment, both he and his wife are supported by his children, none of whom is working in the music line. He is no longer interested in music.
- 60-year old man living in Szolnok county, member of a gypsy musicians' family known all over the country, himself a lead violinist. He started his career in his father's band, then played as an accompanist in various folk bands, travelling abroad a lot. He has been to Austria, Finland, Germany and Italy. After 1989 he could never find employment in his original profession. His financial situation got so bad that his house had to be sold at an auction a year ago to pay his debts. His son, also a trained gypsy lead violinist, works in a flower shop in Budapest as an unskilled assistant.

They had no difficulty finding employment: the National Centre for Entertainment Music sent those who happened to be under no contract to vacancies at restaurants, which could not turn them down. In fact, they had a vested interest in taking them on, since the musicians were working almost free, the music increased the turnover and there was a compulsory size for the band they employed if they wanted to stay in a certain category in the system of catering trade regulations.

The existing system of labour exchange often made it possible for musical bands to work abroad on a contract. They did not want to stay abroad for good partly because this was sure to lead to severe legal consequences (it was illegal and punished with sanctions under Communism even to overstay on one's visa), partly because in Hungary they could live like kings on the "hard currency" they had earned abroad. So everybody was trying to get a job abroad but only for a few months, perhaps, at most, for a year. Their hopes rarely extended beyond Germany or Austria, but some of the really good (and lucky) ones got to Canada, the United States or even to Australia. In these distant places they usually played in Hungarian restaurants to members of the Hungarian communities there.

Difficulties in finding jobs started in the mid-1980s with the spread of cheap mechanical music, which had begun to undermine their opportunities. The process of privatisation that followed in the wake of the social transformation in 1989, made these musicians jobless virtually overnight. The National Centre of Entertainment Music was no longer able to protect their interests. Their tragedy lies in the fact that they are not good at anything else than playing music. Some of them, reluctantly, started out in business and others tried their hand at other jobs, but most of the businesses went bankrupt and many of the persons involved collapsed mentally as a result of the loss of social prestige and financial security. By now they have used up their reserves and they are facing a bland future.

Some of them still try to catch the last straw of a job abroad. They usually target areas with a Hungarian community of people from the older generation of emigrants, the kind of Hungarians who still like to hear one of those sweet melancholy Hungarian songs of which I spoke in the historical sketch. But opportunities are dwindling. The older ones among the musicians have little contact with musicians abroad. When they were travelling, they met only each other or the Hungarians who lived there. They did not learn to speak foreign languages and did not make friends abroad.

Musicians playing authentic folk music. The third major group of musicians consists mostly of Vlach gypsies. These people are self-taught and play authentic gypsy folk music. They have appeared gradually over the past 10-15 years and the demand for their music is growing. This gives them satisfaction especially because those trained musicians who once played traditional classic gypsy music never used to consider them as musicians, not even talked to them.

Previously, they made their living from businesses or commercial activities but the growing interest in their music turned them toward this activity. They are very successful abroad, especially in English-speaking countries where they are paid well on account of their 'exotic' qualities.

They are not marked by a strong inclination to migrate but they make contact with gypsies abroad through their vernacular and they are ready to move to another country if the prospect of a better life emerges. This tendency has been reinforced recently by what

they perceive as a strong anti-gypsy atmosphere in Hungary. Many of them have told me that wherever they go in the world (England, Germany, occasionally Canada), they are certain to come across Vlachi gypsies. They can talk to them, they seek each other's company and are able to help each other. They say these relationships are their main source of information about the situation and opportunities abroad.

Biographical sketches of interviewees in the third group

- 36-year-old woman of Vlachi gypsy origins. She is a housewife, looking after two children. She has been an occasional performer in bands playing authentic gypsy folk music for ten years now. With the interest for this kind of music constantly growing, it is a lucrative occupation. She has been abroad several times.
- 26-year-old gypsy woman living in Budapest, member of a well-known band which plays authentic gypsy folk music. She claims not to be a Vlach gypsy, but she speaks the gypsy language (Romany) as a native does. She spends most of the year abroad.
- 45-year-old Vlachi gypsy man. He runs several businesses but appears regularly in bands which play authentic gypsy folk music. He says it is an easy way of making money, but does not find this sort of activity satisfying enough in itself. He has been abroad, mainly in German-speaking countries, only as a tourist several times over the past few years.

Gypsy Musicians and Migration

We conducted the interviews with members of the three groups of gypsy musicians with a purpose in mind: our aim was to find out as much as possible about those details of the interviewees' lives which have a link with the problem of migration (paying attention not only to the experiences of those interviewed but also of their friends, acquaintances etc.). We tried to acquire detailed information about trips to other countries, temporary jobs in other countries including details about the previous events and the preparations that preceded them, the conditions under which they stayed abroad, the „success" of these trips and their possible consequences. We also asked them to tell us where they had acquired the information on which they made their decisions and how they shared their information and experiences with other members of the gypsy community. The conversations revealed the way in which these sources of information and patterns of exchange influence their inclination to migrate.

Most of the stories about employment abroad relate to the 1960s and 70s, when musicians used to travel to Austria, West-Germany and the USA on one-year contracts. They did not used to take their families: the whole band would stay in one apartment, they would save all the money and bring it back home. Their families would come to visit for a week a few times during the year.

They were often offered the opportunity to settle down but they did not want to stay there because they considered themselves Hungarians and loved their country. Today they regret missing the opportunity. "If we go abroad on a contract for a few months, we are applauded as great Hungarian artists. Back here, we are called filthy gypsies and spat on" – a gypsy man playing traditional gypsy music commented.

A classical musician told us the following story. A friend of his, who is 15 years older than he is, took on a job as a violin tutor at a music school near Vienna in the 1990s. He had been informed of the opportunity by some of his colleagues who had been working there for some time. He enjoyed staying and working there, but he was so homesick that he would not think of settling down (even despite the fact that he took out an insurance[7], which he is still paying and is receiving money from it). He came back after five years to take on the post of director at a country secondary school with a special musical curriculum. His knowledge of music and of foreign languages are greatly appreciated at the school, just as his foreign contacts and his role as an organiser. He has organised several tours for orchestras and choirs of the school's students in Austria and Germany.

My interviewees get their information about job opportunities and conditions and attitudes to gypsies abroad only through personal contacts. They think the media are lying because what they constantly hear from acquaintances and former employers is that they are welcome in foreign countries. They think there is no 'gypsy issue' in Europe yet, although there have been signs of some resentment recently as a result of the massive exodus of Vlach gypsies. They say they (our interviewees) are not identified as Vlach gypsies when abroad, but it must be remarked that this information is more or less second-hand, as they mostly meet only other gypsy musicians. The contacts they make with gypsies and non-gypsies tend to be made during their work. These contacts mostly do not come to more than occasional meetings, the opportunities for which arise mainly when they tour with a Hungarian orchestra abroad.

Classical musicians learn foreign languages at home before they go abroad and improve it during their stay there. In fact, there is nothing much else they could do because they could not do their job properly in a theatre or symphonic orchestra if they could only communicate in Hungarian. They organise their trips on the basis of carefully negotiated contracts so as not to take any risks. They say they are sought out by foreign managers who know exactly the persons „who count". Having no opportunities left at home, many of them would like to stay abroad for good. Their primary target is to acquire a residence permit, which they usually get easily because their friends abroad make careful preparations. Applying for refugee status has become a serious option only in the most recent past (they do not think it is an efficient way).

Young gypsy musicians usually join some orchestra on probation and if their position becomes firm enough, they take their families with them. The first step toward a job abroad is an audition. Auditions are held by orchestras abroad at least once a year, giving these young musicians an opportunity to display their skills, and even if they are not needed on the spot, the names of the good ones make their way into the notebooks of agents. After this they are often visited by impresarios with contract and work permit ready. Before leaving, they usually wind up everything at home, selling whatever property they own, even their flats if need be, to cover their travel expenses.

As far as information about the living conditions of gypsies who are resident abroad is concerned, we were able to get some only from the Vlach gypsies. They have a vivid interest in the circumstances and events of the lives of those living abroad and they can make contact with them whenever they travel. In their opinion gypsies abroad are in a much more

[7] He could not tell us exactly what it was. It may have been some kind of private pension fund.

favourable situation than here in Hungary. This question simply does not arise for the Romungros[8]: they think there is no gypsy issue abroad and they are not considered Roma.

I have also tried to find an answer to the question: how do the Hungarian media influence the migration of musicians, and the preparations they make for taking jobs abroad? I found that the musicians' reliance on the media is negligible. Only the young ones read newspapers, and they tend to read tabloids. They tend to get information from television newsreels, but they have little trust in their truthfulness. They mostly watch trendy programmes on commercial channels (such as *Facts* and *Files*) – they have seen television reports on the massive migration waves recently – but they think the information they get through personal channels is in stark contradiction with these reports. They read virtually no minority papers, indeed, hardly know them, except exceptionally their titles. Generally speaking, one can safely state that they do not trust the media and are not interested in the migration news they might offer. They know about the restrictions on the employment of foreigners recently introduced in European countries, but they trust that the situation will be provisional and that they can try some time later.

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[8] A term used by Vlach gypsies to refer to the gypsies who speak Hungarian as their mother tongue and usually have a different position in Hungarian society from theirs.

APPENDIX

"Waters once run never come back..."

My interviewee is a 62-year-old man who lives with his family in a small town in Pest county. He is a descendant of a famous family of musicians which has a history of several centuries. All his ancestors were performers in the classical gypsy music tradition. The first instrument he learnt to play was the 'cimbalom'[9], but he retrained himself to be a pianist in the early 1960s. He worked as a professional musician in restaurants, and hotels, mostly as a soloist but also as a member of dance-bands. After the political transformation in 1989 he could no longer find a job as a musician. To make a living, he started several businesses from the money he had saved up as a performer, but these attempts failed through a lack of entrepreneurial skill and used up his financial reserves. At present his financial situation is poor and he lives on pension. His two children have also been trained as pianists (one of them has a professional musician's certificate), but neither of them work in the music line. It was their father who advised them to pursue other studies. They went to university and presently work in jobs they were able to get with the help of their degrees. He knows a great number of musicians, both gypsies and non-gypsies, all over the country, but he has also been in contact with musicians who work abroad.

– I was a professional musician for 35 years. At first I learnt to play the cimbalom, but I soon switched to the piano. My father was also a musician, a conductor. He could play all the instruments, from the piano to the violin, from the cimbalom to the clarinet and used to teach musicians in Pest county and Szolnok county how to play all these instruments. This may have been part of my inspiration, but somehow I personally felt I had to spend my whole life doing this, I had been born to do this, and so this was what I came to like. I could play the cimbalom when I was only four or five years old, because there were two cimbaloms in the family. When my father died, his instrument was not immediately sold off, and my uncle Gyula also played that instrument.

– But why is it natural for someone born into a musicians' family to start playing an instrument?

– I could not have expressed this at the time, but now perhaps I can: it is generally true to say that you are born for this, it is in your genes, your emotions, your nervous system, your thoughts, your brain, and you just cannot eradicate it. It happens of itself.

– But you also need training, don't you? Who was the first to tell you to sit down and just start doing it?

– My father – strangely enough I do not really remember this because he died early – made me sit before the cimbalom when I was a very little child and told me – I know this from my the story my mother told me later – that when he was no longer alive, I would surely be a professional artist, teacher or some sort of musician. But I was just playing the

[9] A traditional Hungarian instrument similar to the dulcimer. *(Translator's note)*

cimbalom all the time, whether he made me sit down to it and talked to me and put the hammers in my hand or not.

Later they started teaching me at home. My uncle Gyula did, in fact, when I was six. And when I was about ten or twelve years old they sent me to places such as Szolnok where there was an outstanding cimbalom player. I dare say the best musicians of the country were there in Szolnok, but there were one or two in Cegléd, Debrecen and Miskolc, as well. These were extremely good. So these were the people I learnt from for several years.

– Do you think your father would have wanted you to become a musician at all costs if he had lived longer? I mean, he thought it was worth the effort to become a musician, didn't he? In those years after the war, anyway.

– Yes, I think he would have thought so. I was later told that my father had been widely considered a very educated man, in fact he used to be widely mentioned as one. My mother told me he was a man with an open mind, the sort of man who would be able to see thirty-forty years ahead. For instance, he foresaw the kind of modern world we would live in, in which our music would be recorded and stored and there would not be such a great demand for live performances. Which is a pity, in a way, because there were such incredibly good musicians, and there had been so much painstaking effort going into this, down all those centuries during which all that musical culture and experience was accumulated and embodied in them. And it did, indeed, happen: there is no longer a need for so many musicians, let alone gypsy musicians. It's all a result of technology.

Still, in my understanding, it's just in the family tree – it can't have happened otherwise. Those gypsies who played music professionally, at the level of artistic perfection, used to be referred to as 'gentlemen gypsies'. But to come back to the roots: there were musicians of national renown among my mother's brothers and parents, I can mention names that were familiar nation-wide, such as the Lukács family in Szolnok. They have been the cream of musical life in Szolnok for a hundred years now, the standard-setters. Meanwhile before and immediately after the war there was an occasional physician or some other educated man among them. There were a few people who did not choose the musical career, but music was a formative influence even with them.

We weren't better off financially than others, but perhaps we were ahead of them in our mentality. There were many poor families in those times, before the war. My generation was in a very favourable position after the war, we were given opportunities, and our family was very much a community with a lot of willpower, ambition and, apparently, talent, and we were able to catch up with the level of the society of the time. We were able to build beautiful houses and travelled abroad. We learnt the profession from the best musicians in the country, the great names like István Lukács, who was the best cimbalom player in the world. I mean that, literally. He used to teach in the Studio. I was trained by him for over five years. All this was a matter of talent and willpower – it was a result of those things that it all worked out this way.

– Before and after the war, there were many Roma living here and only few of them were able to rise above the life of some kind of worker, or agricultural labourer on big estates. Only one or two of them made it as musicians. By contrast, everyone here calls himself a musician. Could this be an expression of the desire for a better life that was at work in everyone, and could we say that music was the road to it?

– Yes. And what is very interesting is that only one to two percent of the musician gypsies were able to become artists. The rest of the gypsies had only the desire, although each of them had some instrument, a violin or a cimbalom, standing in the corner at home. That's what we musicians, and the other people call peasant gypsies. I think they are so called because, unfortunately, just like the agricultural labourers among the Hungarians they could not break out. Well, one or two of them up to a certain level, perhaps, but not to that level, just like the Vlach gypsies. So we have nothing to do with them at all, the Vlach gypsies: they are neither professionals, nor musicians. They are a different world. The musician gypsies have as little to do with them as the Hungarians or the Chinese – nothing at all.

– *So the true musician gypsies distinguished themselves not only from the Vlach gypsies but even from the Hungarian gypsies who are not musicians. So the musicians were a real caste?*

– That's right, exactly. But I would also add that the musician gypsies have thought, and will think as long as the world exists, that they are such a narrow circle that no one has ever made his way into it. Musician gypsies have never as much as recognised an ordinary gypsy as someone they know, let alone make friends with him or let them enter their flats. Ordinary gypsies have never married into a musician family, they have not even got close to the musician gypsies. Even today, in this world of general poverty, when society can do without musician gypsies, a real musician gypsy will never condescend to talk to one of those people, or to take them seriously.

– *And what about those who were born into a musician family but did not themselves become musicians because they lacked talent or started pursuing other interests? Were they a problem for their families?*

– Well, they were still treated as members of the family, but at the same time they found themselves on the periphery, and had this feeling of not being inside all the time. In fact, it was such that they would instinctively keep away from the family, the musicians, relatives, even brothers and sisters. They had a minority feeling of not having got that high. But they did keep in contact with their parents. They lived in the family, but on its periphery.

– *How did a good musician spend a typical day in his life? Did he practice? Did he always play the same thing once he had been allowed to join a band?*

– There is no artist in the world that learns or practices more than the musician gypsy. A young man in a good musician family would get up in the morning and practice continuously until lunch was served at noon. And he would do this until he was sixty years old. There were times when superb technique was in great demand, and there were other times when people would want to hear *verbunkos* or Hungarian popular songs, then the musician gypsies would devote the greater effort to that. But they would practice their scales, and could play anything in the world from classic pieces to operas. You had to be able to play at least five hundred Hungarian songs by heart, and wherever they stopped practising it on one day, they would have to continue practising it on the next. And they kept refining them technically, as well as the style, and the one that was the best would not interrupt to say anything, but he was constantly watching them practise. They would not leave a mistake of a minim uncorrected. The best musician would break in saying "What are you doing?". A musician would practice like that for his whole life. Demanding practice sessions with the orchestra for two hours a day, and then they would play in the evening

for six to eight hours. It was also expected of you, in a good musician family, to learn everything you could learn at home, and when you got to the level that the best musician in the family accepted you, you had to go on to a better musician and learn from him. For six months, or a year, according to need, until you got to the level required. In the end you had to get to the kingdom of lead violinists and learn from the king. But they also completed the courses at the music academies. In short, they learnt much more than anyone in former times who got university degrees.

– *Suppose, a young musician learnt a lot and got better than the rest. Could he then take over the leading role as the senior musician in the family?*

– Of course. Every musician family wanted their son to be the best musician. Having the best musician in one's family was the most precious thing they could think of: it meant everything to them. They would sacrifice their lives, their house, anything they had, for that. Every family felt like that about it.

– *And what about those who did not really like to practice and to learn?*

– They would not force them. They just did not become musicians. Their families would say "He wouldn't be a true musician, anyway". Because a musician gypsy has an obsession... I had an uncle, Oszkár Lukács was his name, he was such a superb musician that he was mentioned as second only to Lajos Boros – anyway, this man used to sleep with his violin at night for several decades. And if he woke up at night and had some musical idea, he wouldn't go back to sleep without practising it until he had got it. He would carry his violin under his arm in the street, and he would play it any time he had something. They were such great lovers of music. In fact, they still are. They can no longer make a living from the music, but they have continued playing it up to the present.

– *If musician gypsies were recognised so much in those times, well, did they get rich?*

– They did not get rich, but the gentlemen gypsies could earn a decent living because Hungarians, especially the upper classes, the educated and the barons and the counts, they loved to live it up. In short, the gypsy musicians, the gentlemen gypsies made a living but never got rich. They made enough money to afford them a comfortable and pleasurable life: they would go to espressos with their families, they lived it up, they wore fine clothes and ate delicious food. They could not earn enough to make them millionaires, but they had nice and honourable lives.

– *And what exactly changed after the war? We know that the world of gentlemen living it up in casinos came to an end and was replaced by a different system. What happened to the gypsy musicians?*

– After the war there came the political trend that said the working class is coming, we have eliminated the barons, counts and the rich, long live the proletariat, and this applied to the gypsies as well. The gentlemen gypsies were deprived of opportunities. They allowed a few bands to continue in existence, those whom they needed, or those who grew up under that system, learnt to play music a little bit, and this sort of folk bands were formed where they were allowed to play. They allowed one or two music bands of this kind to exist, but not the others.

– *But what did they do once they could no longer continue playing?*

– Well, it was just like it is today: they were put out of operation, they scraped along, living from hand to mouth. They did not take workmen's jobs, they found that to be below themselves... If you come to think of it, someone who had been learning all his life and

had achieved such high artistic standards in playing, who had been a gentleman should now go and sweep the streets? They just scraped along but never stooped as much as to take an unskilled job in a factory or something.

– *Did they educate their children to be musicians nevertheless?*

– That's right, they educated them to become musicians. Then the Kádár era came, during which a new generation grew up who learnt to play music very well again: the Lakatos', Lajos Boros, the Járóka family, the Fátyol family, the Burkas ... I could go on.

– *During the Kádár era gypsy music still had traditions to cling to. There was gypsy music in all restaurants, and many people were paying attention. At the same time, it was then that a few gypsy musicians started steering their children's education toward classical music and jazz rather than traditional gypsy music. What could have lead to this? Foresight, or the bad experiences? After all, gypsy musicians had a good life in the 1960s and 70s, didn't they?*

– Yes, very good. But some of them foresaw the coming of certain political trends which would reduce the number of gypsy musicians needed. Those among them who were more educated or simply clever got the point and started training their children in dance-music or classical music, or training them to be teachers or artists. That's where Szakcsi Lakatos or Aladár Pege came from. The children of this group of people duly became music teachers and artists, graduated from the Academy and so on. They hit the top level in jazz. They are names known all over the world.

– *The Kádár era saw the foundation of the National Centre for Entertainment Music, on the one hand, and the organisation of the Gypsy Children's Orchestra, on the other. Was musical education completely cut off from the family as a result of these?*

– Not completely. The NCEM represented Hungarian gypsy musicians and dance-musicians as a national organisation. The gypsy music department was headed by widely recognised good musicians and educated men of national renown, They forced the young musicians (not physically, I mean) to meet the requirements of the day. The gypsies were happy to have had their education nationalised. The pianists, for example, used to go up to Szófia street, to the Studio where they were taught by well-trained great artists, the best pianists of the country, to play dance-music, but there was also an independent jazz course. So the State was sponsoring great training opportunities for the students who had to pay almost nothing. The only thing the students from the country had to pay for was travel expenses, but even those were partly covered by the State. So young musicians were not forced, their training was facilitated.

As far as the Gypsy Children's Orchestra is concerned, it supported talented youngsters in Hungary by offering them auditions and entrance examinations with Gyula Farkas, who could sense the absolute pitch. They taught the kids and took the orchestra everywhere. They were given housing and full board.

– *What about those who had previously been trained in a family environment and did not want to take part in such training? I mean, if you did not have a certificate, you could not get employment. Did these organisations exclude people who did not want to join them?*

– No, it wasn't the organisation that excluded them: they excluded themselves, because there was a rule that said that only someone who had passed the appropriate examination was allowed to work as a performer in public places, especially in a fine espresso or restaurant. Which meant that only the Gypsy Children's Band or the NCEM could bring them

up to the level that was necessary for them to pass the exam. This was necessary because expectations had been continuously rising.

– Was there any personal bias involved in the system? In other words, was anyone ever excluded from the opportunity to play professionally because someone had a grudge against him or just did not like him personally?

– No. There was just one question: is he up to the level, or is he not. If he wasn't up to the level, he was given further opportunities to learn more, for several years if it was necessary – there were people who trained for ten years –, and he used to be given a register with which he was allowed to work at minor places in the country, but even there he had to meet certain standards. And when matured, he was given the category and could play anywhere in the world.

– Did it ever happen at the NCEM that a few functionaries were imposed from above? Were the musicians always able to retain control over the organisation?

– No, there were no grossly inadequate appointments. Besides, the mentality of the musician gypsy is such that we do not make distinctions like that. They simply love each other. There are good musicians and poor musicians. If someone isn't good, we do not make friends with him, and that's it. That's the main thing.

– Before the war, the leader of the band used to make a contract with the manager of the establishment. How were contracts made during the NCEM years?

– The NCEM would name a hundred places and ask the first class musicians, the big names "Where in Budapest do you want to go? Which hotel? Which bar?" And wherever he wanted to go, the organisation would send him there for a year, or half a year, so the greatest musicians had the choice. But there was another possibility, too: the restaurants were also allowed to ask for particular musicians. There was the Mátyás Cellar, for example, a lot of foreign millionaires among the customers, a really exquisite place. That place was sort of reserved for Sándor Lakatos, the number one lead violinist in the country. He was the standard there, the man they wanted. No other musician would ever want to get there before him. And the catering places trusted the NCEM. They knew it would send people who could cope. There were good musicians even at third category places.

– And what was the usual procedure if the musician was employed directly by manager of the establishment?

– The manager telephoned the NCEM saying that he would like to take on a particular so and so lead violinist. There were no advantages to this, but no disadvantages, either. The contract was made by the Centre and the musicians had to take it. It was a government regulation that they were to play for six hours and have a ten-minute break every hour. Everyone was provided with a free dinner, and a fixed fee. There were briefings for the musicians, and good manners, the observance of norms was part of their examination. Later on they would require everyone to have secondary school levels, and even later foreign language skills were a requirement on the lead violinists and the pianists.

– In other words, a musician with an examination certificate in Hungary always had a job. What happened if someone did not have a contract and contacted the Centre: did they help him to get a job?

– Yes, immediately. They did that until the last moment, that is 1988. Until that time a good lead violinist or a pianist could choose from a hundred opportunities. The Centre did a good job in representing their interests.

– How did it happen after 1989? Did the musicians find themselves unemployed overnight?

– They threw them out even if they were under a contract. For instance, there came a man from Biharkeresztes who bought the establishment for the price of five hundred pigs, and the next day he was free to hire whatever band he wanted, and they are not worth talking about.

– Wasn't there anyone to defend the interests of the musicians?

– No, there wasn't. The Centre couldn't do that, they weren't a political organisation that could have influenced matters in the country in any way.

– How many gypsy musicians were there before 1989, do you think?

– There might have been six to seven thousand gypsy musicians in the 1970s.

– And how many gypsies were there in, say, a thousand musicians playing in restaurants?

– 850 out of a thousand, I'm sure.

– What were the areas of music in which the performers tended to be non-gypsies?

– Bands that used to play at weddings, balls, accordion bands.

– While we're on the topic of musicians who play at places like restaurants and hotels, what about the piano? Was it an instrument of the gypsies, or of others?

– The gypsies used to play the piano as well as the folk instruments – the violin, the contrabass, the viola. There were somewhat fewer drummers among them, and wind instruments used to be played mostly by Hungarians. There may have been one or two gypsies playing the saxophone and the clarinet but no others.

– So in the Kádár era everyone had a job, everybody could work and the musicians lived well.

– Good gypsy musicians could get rich under that regime. Everyone could buy a nice house, had a car and a job and appreciation. The income situation was such that everyone had a reasonable salary on which one could live comfortably, and three or five times that much in tips. You could make good money. You could get together, well not six thousand perhaps, but at least one thousand Forints every night even in the smallest, most far-out and worst third category place you could imagine.

It was a good life, a good middle-class life, there were no beggars and millionaires. There was a good, solid middle class, and everyone could get a job. Those who would not work were called work-evaders and a threat to the public and they were taken by the police and locked up. Everyone earned as much as to... well, a glass of beer cost one fifty, later two Forints, a small Wiener schnitzel cost ten sixty, the big one sixteen, so everyone made enough money to support the family and have one or two glasses of beer once in a while, and everyone paid a glass or two for the musicians. That's how they lived and everyone was happy. It was as normal as that. There were rich people, to be sure, and they would honour the musicians even more than the others. They said: live and let live, and that was actually what everyone lived by.

– Those one or two thousand Forints a night that you mentioned – how many tipping customers did you need to get that much? How much did one customer give?

– Well, sometimes one man gave as much as twenty at other times. But there were also outstanding events. In one particular town, for instance, a certain musician made forty thousand Forints in two days. That's roughly a million today.

– If the musicians earned so much for several decades and lived so well and were the gypsy aristocracy, then what has happened during the past ten years, since the transformation that made them so poor? Where has all the money gone?

– It's a combination of two things. First, most of those musicians are old men now. Nobody wants them any more. Nobody wants anyone above forty. The other side of the question is: where is the money? Well, the truth is, gypsies, the musicians have always considered a life spent in saving something that is below their style. They have always spent what they have earned. And now it's no jobs, no music, no sources of living.

– And what about the young people who are still training to be gypsy musicians? Are they going to have a chance to make a living?

– Not at all. You mustn't train to be an instrumentalist any longer, let alone a violinist, or any other folk music instrument like the contrabass or the viola. Never again. Waters once run never come back, nor will that lifestyle, those people, that mentality or the demand. They will find out, if they do, that it is ridiculous and hopelessly stupid to learn anything like that today. All artists say that, not just me.

– On the other hand, a number of self-taught musicians of Vlach gypsy origins have been making increasing sums of money by playing their own music, with a tin can, and a guitar. What do you think of that?

– That's just ridiculous musical illiteracy. They are not good at anything in the world deserving the name music. They have nothing to do with music, and have no present, will have no future. You have to train at a conservatory or a college to be up to music. If you want to play music, you first have to learn it. It's not like you just start banging the gate or a can, that's just charlatanism. Mere eye-wash, anything but art.

– In the Kádár era a lot of musicians had the chance to go abroad. Did you know any one of them?

– I was on friendly terms with almost everyone that used to go abroad. Or if the relationship wasn't that close, I certainly knew them well.

– What did they tell you about the living conditions out there?

– Hungary used to be known for two things: gypsy music and the goulash soup. When a gypsy musician went abroad in those times, everyone would hug him and applaud him, the Hungarian emigrants would kiss them with tears in their eyes. And when they played them "I was born by the side of the meandering river Tisza..." the Hungarians who had left long before would give them all their money, they would fill their violins with gold.

– So they could make a lot of money abroad. Who or what did you have to be to get out?

– For instance, you could get out if you had a great name and asked for permission. But the Centre wanted to send out people who would cope and enhance the country's reputation. Secondly, the Gypsy Children's Orchestra took the young ones all around the world. And thirdly, there was this army orchestra, the folk ensemble, and two or three others, and these would always tour foreign countries, they were asked for and their manager just kept signing contracts, and would tell them now we're going there, now there, and so on. They were on the road all the time.

– Were there any among them who said they wanted to stay there?

– Yes, and in fact there are a lot of them living abroad at this moment. Somehow they felt that it wasn't a good idea to come back, that an economic crash might be coming which would undermine the lives of musicians.

– *There has been a great wave of emigration in the gypsy community for the past few years. Many of them go to Canada, some have also asked for political asylum. Why do you think they left?*

– Most of the people who left that way were not musicians. Because the people who were excommunicated were the ones who did not like to work, or had the kind of job in which you are no longer needed. Now, if a musician gypsy left, he left with his band, and has remained an artist gypsy to the present day. Those who are enduring this life of poverty here are only the old ones, who are so advanced in years that they no longer feel able to start a new life.

– *Would you have stayed abroad in the 1960s or 70s if you had had the chance to do so?*

– That's a difficult question. I would have left if I had not had a family. Now it's too late, and I am having great difficulty making money. Perhaps I would have left, if... but my family did not let me go. I had to bring them up properly.

The Zámoly Roma – the Road to Strasbourg

By István Hell

In the summer of 2000, the gypsy families known in Hungary and in the international press as 'the Zámoly Roma' requested the European Court of Human Rights seated in Strasbourg to make a statement to the effect that their fundamental rights were violated and they were persecuted by government and local authority organs in Hungary. They also asked the Court to state that there is a wide-spread anti-Roma atmosphere in their country.

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

The Family

Rudolf Kolompár, the head of what was to become the Krasznai family, was born on February 23, 1927 in Pécs (he died in Strasbourg in September 2001, at the age of 74). His life companion, Friderika Kolompár, nicknamed *Frima*, was born on April 8, 1933 in Sárhida (Zala county).

They brought up eight children, two from their earlier marriages and six of their own.

The father, Elemér Kolompár, was born from Rudolf's first marriage on May 15, 1950, György from the mother's on December 8, 1952.

The family lived in Bükkösd, Baranya county, from keeping livestock and dealing in horses. Their first children were born in that village, in chronological order: József, or *Pubi*, (September 8, 1954), János (August 13, 1956), and the twins Gyula and Ibolya (March 23, 1959; Ibolya died in Canada while receiving medical treatment; and was buried in Hamilton). Their other twins, Sándor and András (June 14, 1962) were born after they had left Bükkösd.

In 1960 the Kolompárs moved to the village of Csór in Fejér county, where they lived on a gypsy estate attached to the periphery of the village. Rudolf Kolompár worked in a mine, at an aluminium furnace and in a power plant in neighbouring Várpalota. In the 1960s he requested the Ministry of the Interior to change his family's name to Krasznai. His aim was to prevent to his children from suffering discrimination at school.

After training to be a mason and a lorry-driver, József Krasznai, the eldest of the Krasznai siblings worked in Budapest for a few years (his daughter from his first marriage is called Henrietta Krasznai, or *Baba*), then, on a mortgage from the National Savings Bank, he built a family house in Csór and took on a job as lorry-driver with the Alba Volán transport

company in Székesfehérvár. He and his second wife, Gizella Jónás, had a son, József Krasznai, or *Csaba*, and a daughter, Timea Krasznai, or *Karol*.

From the Gypsy Estate in Csór to the Village of Zámoly

In 1985, Friderika Kolompár left the gypsy estate of Csór and moved to the part of Zámoly, a village a few kilometres from Csór, which is called Belmajor, buying herself an old peasant house from the money she got for her house in Csór. Her decision to move was motivated by a family conflict: her husband had met his former life companion, and Friderika reacted by breaking off her relationship with him and moving away. Family peace was soon restored, mainly as a result of their children's requests: *Frima* resumed her relationship with her husband and they settled down together in the house in Zámoly. At that time, there were two Roma families (the Lakatos' and the Gómans), consisting partly of distant relatives of the Krasznai family, living in the houses in Belmajor which were originally built for servants before the war.

In the late 1980s four of Friderika Kolompár's adult children moved to Zámoly, too: Gyula and his life companion, Ágnes Horváth, or *Mari*, squatted part of a house there. Ibolya, Gyula's twin sister (Mrs László Balogh) moved in with Gyula. Having no child of her own, Ibolya was looking after Gyula's children, Elemér, Krisztián and Szilvia. Like József before him, János built a house on mortgage from the National Savings Bank in Csór. He still lives and works there as a skilled solderer at the Inota Aluminium Furnace in Várpalota despite the fact that the members of his family have been repeatedly attacked physically in recent times. Sándor and András also moved to Zámoly, Sándor lived in a flat which he was allowed to use as a favour, and András was a tenant. Living in the servants' houses, László G., or *Drizár*, and his wife, Ilona Lakatos', or *Giza*'s family were their neighbours at that time.

According to later fact-finding investigations and documents kept by the village authority, there were two families which lived in flats they actually owned. Property relations concerning the other houses are not clear enough. Some of the houses belonged to the local agricultural co-operative but were not used by it, others were the property of the local Savings Fund. All were in a poor condition.

The Zámoly Roma men worked as 'hands' (cleaners, refuse collectors) with various firms run by the Székesfehérvár municipal maintenance authority, in the oil refinery in Százhalombatta and as navvies with various employers.

Around the Social Transformation of 1989–90

At the time of the social transformation in 1989-90, many of the Zámoly Roma lost their permanent jobs and from then on had to live from odd jobs. With the exception of Ibolya Krasznai, who now had a serious heart problem, the women did their traditional jobs of running the household and looking after the children. Rudolf Krasznai had been put on disability pension. Much of the income of the families came from a variety of allowances such as the child benefit, the regularly arriving education support, unemployment

benefits and the income substitute. The brothers and sisters shared their living space with those of their kin who were left without a flat or house of their own, and after some time there were several Roma families living in Zámoly, including the grandchildren who now had families of their own.

At the suggestion of Zámoly teachers, the children of these Roma families who were at, or about to enter, primary school were often sent before expert committees in Székesfehérvár to decide about the necessity of transferring them to the Arany János Primary School in Székesfehérvár, which is a special school for 'slightly mentally disabled pupils'. About every fourth child in the family was declared 'slightly mentally disabled'. (Today, these children are studying at French schools in Strasbourg under average conditions, sometimes with good results.)

THE STORY UNWINDS

The First Conflicts in Zámoly

During the night of October 30-31, 1997, Zámoly was hit by strong wind and rain, which caused the roof of one of the semi-detached servant's houses to slip. On inspection, the village local authority also found that some of the bearing walls had also been damaged. After inspecting the entire line of semi-detached houses, the mayor's office found the buildings dangerous and unfit for human dwelling. At the mayor's orders, the families of the Krasznai siblings (Gyula, Ibolya, Sándor and András) and the Góman family were put up in the theatre of the local community centre. Later on the parents, Rudolf Krasznai and Friderika Kolompár were also moved into the community centre, who reckoned that the village would see to the restoration of their damaged home.

The exact extent of the damage done to the buildings can no longer be ascertained. At the order of the mayor, without giving notice to the relevant construction authorities, and without informing the owners and users, their houses were demolished. No written expert opinion on the condition of the buildings was given. The notary's decree for the demolition, dated November 13, 1997 and setting a deadline of December 1 for the execution, lacks an appeal clause, which is a breach of the law according to the ombudsman. The houses were quickly bulldozed during the week following November 2. The buildings bulldozed included Rudolf Krasznai and Friderika Kolompár's house, which was also situated in the Belmajor[1] but was separate from and stood some distance away from the former servants' houses and had not suffered any significant damage. The persons proceeding as agents of the local authority and the first instance construction authority acknowledged,

[1] There is only one Roma family living in Belmajor, Zámoly today, József Lakatos, *Szibbaj*, and his wife, Piroska Lakatos, or *Muki's* family. They had bought their house from a local inhabitant, but were able to pay part of the price only, so the house was sold at auction. There being no other prospective buyer, the house went back to the original owner at half the auction price. Of the 13 children the couple had brought up (they had lost one as an infant) Melinda Lakatos, András Góman's life companion now living in Strasbourg with her three children. As she came back to visit once in January 2001, only her husband was given political asylum, so she has no work permit in France, either. In late November 2001, this family also asked for asylum in Strasbourg. Their application is being processed.

during the inspection conducted by the ombudsman, the fact that no official records had been made either of the inspection of premises or of its findings, and that there was no written expert opinion on, or record of the conditions which the inspectors had supposedly perceived.

The Roma who had been moved into the community centre could not pay the gas and electricity bills, so the local authority switched off the gas supplies of the building in April 1998 and electricity from April 30 to May 14, 1998. Water supply was also suspended but it was soon resumed by the National Health Office to remove the hazard of an epidemic.

In the period between October 31 1997 and July 13, 1999, i.e. the time during which they were living crammed together in the theatre room of the community centre – the Roma families were physically assaulted several times. Mrs László Balogh, i.e. Ibolya Krasznai, president of the Zámoly Gypsy Minority Self-Government, tells us that atrocities were especially common on winter nights when there was a disco dancing event in the village. Young people arriving at the disco from neighbouring villages, e.g. Csákvár, Gánt, Lovasberény, occasionally Székesfehérvár, Alcsútdoboz and Felcsút, would smash in the windows of the community centre with stones and harass the Roma there in other ways. Several children, including babies, had to be taken to hospital because they contracted pneumonia and other pulmonary diseases in the theatre which could not be heated and was therefore cold.

The Zámoly Roma reported many of these cases to the police but the offenders were never caught.

Prejudices

The anti-Roma atrocities were reinforced by the political declarations, comments and other utterances made by the government and the local authority which tended to foster prejudices against the Hungarian Roma, including those in Zámoly who often became the topic of media news reports around the time.

Gyula Horn, prime minister of Hungary between 1994 and 1998, called on the Roma on several occasions (e.g. at the congress of the Roma organisation Lungo Drom and at a plenary meeting of the miners' trade union in Balatonfüred) to 'distance themselves from the criminals' and expressed his judgement that work-evaders should not press for (housing) rights. These speeches were made at the time when the 'ghetto affair' of Székesfehérvár was in the focus of public attention. (The local authority, which was dominantly right-wing, wanted to settle out of the town the Roma families who had been previously resettled into 1 Rádió street.) Prime minister Viktor Orbán, in a speech made in 1998, „offered" work and education to the gypsy community, 70-80 percent of which were unemployed and exposed to wide-spread discrimination in workplaces and institutions.

The speech was applauded by the right wing, containing as it did an unmistakable message: the gypsies themselves are responsible for their disadvantages, poor education and their status of outcasts from the world of employment.

Resigning Zámoly mayor János Horváth was interviewed by *Tizenhat Óra*, a program on Radio Kossuth on November 1998 and by *Aktuális*, a political program aired on Hungarian Television 1. In these interviews he used expressions and made factual claims about the members of the Zámoly Gypsy Minority Self-Government, i.e. the gypsies of Zámoly,

which , in the words of the minority ombudsman, a court „may find to constitute a case of libel before the general public which is injurious to interests", and are also defamatory.[2]

The Hysteria Campaign Against the Gypsies

As a result of a general hysteria campaign against the gypsies, people in Zámoly started collecting signatures to show their support for the removal of the Roma families from the community centre.

At the initiative of Éva Hegyesi Orsós, president of the government office which deals with minority affairs[3], Dr Jenő Kaltenbach, parliamentary ombudsman of national and ethnic minority rights conducted an inquiry into the Zámoly Roma affair between April 30 and August 12, 1998. The statements and subsequent measures were published in a thirty-page document (registered under 2960/1998). According to the statement of the minority ombudsman

> "...while formally complying with its obligations arising under the laws on the renting of flats and rooms and on their alienation, and taking steps to provide a provisional solution to their housing problem, the local authority of Zámoly did not take the steps which would have been necessary for the creation of final or at least long-term housing facilities, steps which were required of it and which cannot be justified with reference to the lack of budgetary resources."

As a result of the unlawful measures taken by the notary several Roma families lost their right to the use of a flat and became so vulnerable that they were threatened by the immediate danger of homelessness.

According to another statement made by the ombudsman, the position of the Roma families in terms of social security was so dramatically eroded by the measure taken by the notary and the local authority that the resulting situation amounts to an indirect violation of their fundamental, constitutional rights to human dignity and to the free choice of a place of living. Explaining that these breaches of law were an example of indirect ethnic discrimination, the ombudsman forwarded his statements and suggestions to competent authorities as well as to the Fejér County Attorney-General's Office.

The mayor claimed several times that „there was no plot for sale" in Zámoly and that the Belmajor area of Zámoly was a 'business and industrial area' where the construction of houses for human living is prohibited by the detailed reconstruction plan for the village. József Krasznai claimed that the inhabitants of the village had been unofficially forbidden from selling building plots or houses to gypsies. During the same period, a local authority meeting, which had been unlawfully declared a closed session, made decisions on the sale of building plots owned by the authority – to someone who was not a gypsy.

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[2] According to a letter written by minority ombudsman Jenő Kaltenbach to Ibolya Krasznai, president of the Zámoly Gypsy Minority Self-Government on November 28, 1998. The ombudsman also sent Ibolya Krasznai a recorded version of the programme but this is not available to us so we cannot quote from it.

[3] Office of National and Ethnic Minorities.

The ombudsman's inquiry lead also to the conclusion that Belmajor – a centrally situated area of Zámoly – was in reality a living area rather than a 'business and industrial zone'.

What József Krasznai (vice president of the Hungarian Roma Parliament, president of the Independent Gypsy Organisation of Fejér County, at the time president of the Székesfehérvár Gypsy Minority Self-Government), the eldest of the Krasznai brothers had claimed was now confirmed: relying on and stirring up the anti-gypsy sentiments among the population, the local authority of Zámoly tried to get rid of the Roma who had been left homeless.

Attempted Solutions

Officials at the Ministry of the Interior, the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities and the County Assembly of Fejér County suggested several times that the local authority of Zámoly should apply with to county regional planning council for a grant which would cover the expenses of construction, but the mayor rejected these suggestions saying he was 'being put under pressure'.

"It is a condition of receiving a regional planning council grant that the families should be able to cover 20% of the construction expenses", Aladár Horváth, president of the board of trustees of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation wrote in his report on the facts dated July 22, 1998, which he forwarded to Mrs Magda Kósa Kovács, president of the human rights committee of Parliament, adding that the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government was ready to cover the required 20% from the 100 million HUF support provided by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development for purposes of regional planning and the development of backward areas."

This proposal, too, was turned down by the local authority.

"Governmental funds must be secured for the purchase of at least two building plots, which costs 2 million HUF at most – the document quoted from the Roma Civil Rights Foundation continues –for the construction of 3 semi-detached houses with 3 flats each from funds available from the government resources provided for the purpose of reducing social disadvantage [...] As far as the 35% beneficiary's contribution required for the use of the support is concerned, 20% should be provided by the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, and a construction company should be found which is ready to acknowledge unpaid work to be done by the family members as an equivalent to the remaining 15%."

On October 30, 1998, negotiations were conducted at the mayor's office with the participation of MP Edit Herczog (Hungarian Socialist Party), József Takács, the new mayor elected in the autumn of that year, Ibolya Krasznai, president of the Zámoly Gypsy Minority Self-Government, Ildikó Dobóvári, head of the office of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government, Aladár Horváth, president of the board of trustees of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, József Krasznai, vice-president of the Hungarian Roma Parliament and others. Agreement was reached on the following points:

- the county assembly would help the village authority to pay the public works bills;
- the local authority would exchange the building plot in Fenyves street bought with the participation of József Krasznai – the plot on which construction did not start as a result of pressure from the inhabitants and with reference to the village planning schemes – for a plot on which construction could actually be started;
- the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government would ensure the construction of houses;
- József Krasznai would help the Roma to find employment;
- Edit Herczog would have the windows of the community centre glazed on her own expenses (amounting to fifty or sixty thousand HUF).

The Anomalies in the Re-housing and in the Construction

József Krasznai, later spokesman for the Hungarian gypsies asking for asylum in Strasbourg, said in an interview:

> "The mayor suggested to the minority office of the Horn government[4] that the government should provide 25 million HUF for the purpose of placing the Roma in various parts of the country outside Zámoly. This suggestion was made at a time when it was common knowledge that the Roma might be allotted some money for the purpose of building social welfare flats in Zámoly.
>
> It would also have been an acceptable solution to place the Roma somewhere near Zámoly, in the vicinity of Székesfehérvár.
>
> It would have carried a bad political message, too, if a village had been 'purged' of gypsies on a government subsidy. Finally we agreed to build flats from the 'social policy' support which is due every citizen of Hungary, i.e. not from funds specially allotted to Roma, and that the flats would be the private property of those for whom they would be built. Since there were small families among the gypsies, the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government supplemented the social policy support from its own budget.
>
> I managed to find a person resident in Székesfehérvár who was ready to sell plots in Zámoly to gypsies. This released a signature collecting campaign against us. Later it turned out that the construction 'does not fit into' the detailed reconstruction scheme for the village, so the Roma soon found themselves in a swampy area at the edge of the village. Even so, problems with the reconstruction scheme soon emerged, so the National Savings Bank did not transfer the money in time. The anti-gypsy press 'reported' that the Roma do not want to work, while, in fact, gypsy volunteers for the construction, unknown to all of us, turned up from places as far away as Kalocsa. The work was stopped several times by the village and the National Savings Bank." (*Magyar Hírlap,* April 24, 2001.)

Reports of similar import, stirring hatred for the gypsies, appeared in certain newsreels of public radio and television, in the pro-government daily and in the two extreme nationalist weeklies.

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[4] The president of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities was Éva Orsós at the time.

After the new mayor József Takács reported the Roma to the police on account of the unpaid bills incurred at the community centre and had them removed from the theatre, Flórián Farkas, president of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government had them brought to Budapest one night. The Zámoly Roma were put up in the community centre of the National Gypsy Self-Government under very special conditions: they were prohibited from leaving the building and security guards were posted near the entrance. Although there were habitable rooms, a theatre, offices and bathrooms and toilets in the upstairs part of the building, the families with their children were 'accommodated' on the ground floor amidst heaps of construction material. They were prohibited from communicating with the press and put under threat: they were told that they would get any help only if they do not tell the truth about the conditions under which they were put up or about their lack of personal freedom. As a result of these threats, while Ibolya Krasznai did tell some associates of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation about their situation, she spoke favourably about them and denied having been shut in at the subsequent press conference, which was conducted in the presence of Flórián Farkas.

The Misconceived Role of the National Gypsy Self-Government[5]

As the Zámoly local authority expelled the Roma from the local community centre because of the unpaid public utility bills on July 31, 1999, the National Gypsy Self-Government undertook, not without pressure from the government, to solve the housing problem of the Zámoly Roma by using the governmental housing construction support due to families with children, and by advancing the sum that was supposed to be paid by the beneficiaries themselves, i.e. money from its own budget. In deciding to do so, it avoided the option recommended by the minority ombudsman, namely of involving other civil organisations representing and protecting the interests of the citizens concerned, by demanding of the Zámoly authorities that they should solve the housing problem of the Roma. In doing so, it created a very bad precedent: the example of a separate 'Roma social policy', and transcended the sphere of action and authority of minority self-government, which protect interests with the purpose of securing cultural autonomy.

Collecting Signatures in Zámoly to Express Objections to the Construction of Housing for the Roma

After the purchase of the plot mentioned in the interview with József Krasznai, local authority representatives launched and supported a campaign of signatures in protest against the construction of houses for the Roma. According to the Zámoly Roma, it was as a result of the campaign rather than of the disharmony with the detailed reconstruction scheme of the village that the construction of their flats, implemented by the Public Service Corporation of the National Gypsy Self-Government specialising in the construction of social welfare flats, could start at the site where it started, namely Vasvári Pál street, at the edge of the village. János Babai, a representative of the National Gypsy Self-Government took part in

[5] Called 'National Gypsy Minority Self-Government' before January 27, 1999.

the organisation of operations. Writer-journalist Béla Osztojkán, vice-president of the same authority undertook to 'handle the affair politically' and to manage relations with the press.

At the same time as the Zámoly Roma were practically locked up in the property of the National Gypsy Self-Government, which was undergoing redecoration and partial reconstruction, attempts to find rented flats for them failed and the National Gypsy Self-Government started constructing a gypsy estate of wooden cabins made partly from new materials, partly from materials taken from a housebreaker's yard, and of containers, in Vasvári Pál street in Zámoly. Among the houses there were grocery store stands with glassed display shelves, other rooms for purposes other than human living and two new wooden cabins bought from a Ukrainian businessman at a 50% reduced price. All in all, six structures were put up in Vasvári street, all consisting of one single living room and all unfit for the instalment of heating, cooking and bathroom facilities. (The Roma used one of the containers for cooking and the other for storing their furniture. The estate was completed by a wheeled toilet and shower.

The construction of brick houses could finally start in the autumn of 1999 as a result of a fairly complicated construction and financing arrangement.[6] As indicated earlier, to receive the governmental housing construction support (the social policy support) the beneficiaries have to have a certain percentage o the costs available from their own resources. This contribution from the beneficiaries' own resources was paid in advance by the building contractor – the public service corporation of the National Gypsy Self-Government – in exchange for earthwork and other unskilled work to be done by the Roma. The National Savings Bank was prepared to transfer the governmental support sum after the public service corporation presented the percentage in question.

Construction was often interrupted because of formal objections made by the local authority and there were frequent delays in the transfer of the social policy support to the public service corporation by the National Savings Bank. At the same time, all the Roma concerned took part in the work in Vasvári Pál street, supported by relatives as well as gypsy and Hungarian friends.

The Hungarian Right-Wing Press

Reports and programmes which encouraged existing prejudices by describing the Zámoly Roma as lazy, work-evading and criminal were published and broadcast in the right-wing press several times, including, primarily, the pro-government daily *Magyar Nemzet*, on Hungarian Television and on Hungarian Radio, supposedly a public service establishment. Officials of the Zámoly local authority as well as politicians at the national level voiced their opinions which often involved the use of derogatory language referring to the Roma families in Vasvári street.

As a result, anti-gypsy sentiment grew all-over the country but it was directed with special force against the Zámoly Roma who were described as receiving flats from the

[6] Similar 'financing arrangements' were interpreted as fraudulent crediting in other parts of the country, e.g. in attorney's offices in Borsod-Abaúj county, and the contractors were punished and the customers were admonished by the attorney's office.

state as a privilege conferred on them on the basis of ethnic origin, as 'presents' which they had in no way deserved. Of the several television reports aired in this period those made by prospective Party of Hungarian Truth and Life MP Tibor Franka were and will remain especially 'memorable'. A journalist aspiring for a political career, Tibor Franka repeatedly suggests the unmistakable conclusion: the Zámoly Roma do not deserve to have the flats, they are receiving them as presents from the state, as it were, and they are not even ready to contribute to their construction.

The increasing tension in the village between the Roma and the rest of the population was in no small part due to this kind of media activity. Ibolya Krasznai, president of the Local Gypsy Self-Government and others told us that they had been exposed to various kinds of threatening conduct, loud provocative remarks on the Székesfehérvár coach, in food shops and restaurants etc. and there had been minor skirmishes, as well.

According to Károly Flaschner, an inhabitant of Zámoly, there were several illegal workers at the construction, and many of these persons have not received their wages to the present day. The National Gypsy Self-Government is indebted to the Varga family, whose property lies next to the Roma estate. The plot, partly on swampy land, in Vasvári street had turned out to be too small for the houses of the gypsy families, so the leaders of the public service corporation struck an unwritten agreement with the Varga family, whose house was on the verge of collapsing: The Vargas allowed the corporation to erect some of the buildings to reach over to their plot, in exchange for the renovation of their house. This was never done, and since the condition of the Vargas' house became worse, Piroska Varga and her life companion, Viktor Mayer 'squatted' one of the empty flats on the estate in the summer of 2001.[7]

The Crime which Ended with Homicide; Funeral and Criminal Proceedings

According to the copy of indictment submitted by the District Attorney of Fejér County, three young men resident in Csákvár, a village near Zámoly, drove in a Trabant car which one of them had just bought, to the Zámoly gypsy estate late on the evening of August 28, 1999, with the intention of taking revenge on Krisztián Krasznai for some previous offence done to a friend of theirs, who is also an inhabitant of Csákvár. (Krisztián Krasznai born on September 19, 1980, is the younger son of Gyula Krasznai, who was given political asylum in Strasbourg. With his parents divorced and her mother living on the Sóstó housing estate in Székesfehérvár, he was fostered by Ibolya Krasznai, Gyula's twin sister, who has no child of her own.) Sándor N., who drove the car, Ferenc Cs., the later victim, and his companion Zoltán P. stopped in front of the estate in Vasvári street. Cs. And P. got out of the car and started looking for Krisztián Krasznai. The exact details of the story after this are still somewhat unclear. What is certain is that a fight broke out between the Zámoly Roma and the visitors from Csákvár and one of them, Ferenc Cs., who was already fleeing, was so severely injured on the head that he died in hospital the following day.

[7] The flat in question belongs to Etel Lakatos, also known as *Baba*, and her children, who did not go to Strasbourg with the Krasznai family. At the moment they are living in an adobe house without electricity in a village called Kisláng.

His funeral was turned into a racist, anti-gypsy political event by the activists of the youth organisation of the Party of Hungarian Truth and Life who had arrived from all over the country. *Magyar Fórum* devoted a detailed report to the funeral, which was accompanied by repeated utterances of racist, nationalist and anti-gypsy slogans.

Zoltán P. and Sándor M., who were fleeing in the direction of Csákvár, did not call either the ambulance or the police to help their companion who had been left behind. The ambulance was called by Szilvia Krasznai, Krisztián's sister, on her companion, Ferenc Lakatos' (also called *Pubi*) mobile phone. The police were called, with considerable delay, by Zoltán P. and Sándor N., who had been urged by friends in Csákvár to do so.

In the course of the court proceedings, which are still going on, Zoltán P. was heard as a witness. He told the court that they had ended up at the gypsy estate by accident and had really been looking for Richárd V. (His testimony seems to be contradicted by some 'off record' information given to an associate of *Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, a reporter of the Roma Press Centre and the fact-finding associate of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation by a waitress in a Csákvár espresso bar, who did not wish to have her identity revealed. According to her story, the statements in the indictment are true: Ferenc Cs. and Zoltán P. both of them practitioners of kempo, an Eastern martial art which uses a stick as a weapon, were heading to the Zámoly gypsy estate late in the evening to 'settle accounts' for some old conflict at a discotheque. According to the waitress' story, this was the plan for the carrying out of which Ferenc Cs., who had consumed some alcohol, found a driver in the person of Sándor N. and an assistant in the person of Zoltán P.).

So far, there has been one single piece of evidence in support of Krisztián Krasznai's culpability, namely Richárd V.'s testimony. Richárd V. told the court that Krisztián Krasznai himself had told him, in the presence of Antal K., that the blows which later caused Ferenc Cs.' death in the Székesfehérvár hospital, had come from his own hand. Antal K. denied this in court, saying that Krisztián Krasznai had never said anything of the sort.

Krisztián Krasznai was first detained during a police interrogation in the autumn of 1999, but he was not then remanded in custody as a result of the intervention of his legal representative. He was caught again in February, 2000, by which time he had been wanted by the police, and he was ordered to be remanded in preliminary custody.[8]

Magdolna D., a resident of Budapest, was staying as a guest at the gypsy estate at the time of the crime. She gave first aid to Ferenc Cs., who obviously had a very bad injury, before the ambulance arrived. During the police examination stage Magdolna D. confessed that she had caused the severe head injuries to Ferenc Cs. She was detained a few days after the incident on suspicion of bodily harm with fatal consequences, and the court ordered her to be remanded in custody. Of weak and fragile physique, Magdolna D. was unanimously described by eye-witnesses as incapable of causing such severe injury. When asked by an associate of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation why she had undertaken to declare herself guilty of the crime, Ibolya Krasznai replied: out of love. The identity of the person she was in love with could not be ascertained. The person in question „was no longer

[8] After it had proved impossible to install any kind of heating into the wooden cabins, the Zámoly Romas were again moved to Budapest by the National Gypsy Self-Government in late 1999. The subpoenas addressed to Krisztián Krasznai at his address in Zámoly failed to reach him and the court interpreted his absence as 'hiding'. This was the ground for ordering him to be remanded in custody.

around the estate", Ibolya Krasznai said. After Krisztián Krasznai became suspect, Magdolna D. was soon released.

The court had no opportunity to question her: she died of a heroin overdose in a toilet of the MÁV Hospital in Budapest in the summer of 2000.

At the request of dr Attila Monostory, the attorney representing the aggrieved party in the proceedings, Fejér County Court heard an anonymous witness. The press, other witnesses and even Krisztián Krasznai, the accused, were excluded from the hearing, which was attended only by his counsels, the prosecutor, and the members of the court.

Described as 'specially protected' the witness is reported by the press and other apparently reliable sources to have delivered second- or third-hand testimony, like Richárd V. had done before him. He told the court that he had been told by Ibolya Krasznai that Krisztián Krasznai had, indeed, been the murderer, and that the conflict had arisen as a result of some unsettled drug deal. This kind of motivation cannot be ruled out completely in view of the fact that Magdolna D., the later heroin overdose victim, was on the estate at the time.

The second part of the protected witness' testimony, however, is implausible: he claims that Magdolna D. was persuaded, in the presence of Aladár Horváth, president of the board of trustees of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation, József Krasznai, the uncle of the accused, and a journalist (head of the fact-finding group of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation) to confess having committed the crime. This is flatly denied by the persons mentioned in the testimony.

Aladár Horváth was not in Zámoly at the time. The Foundation was represented by his fact-finding colleague, who also denies having taken part in such a conversation. József Krasznai was staying in Greece at the time. The court referred the case back to the attorney's office for supplementary investigation with a deadline of two months. According to *Népszabadság*, no supplementary indictment has been made, which means that the information given by the witness has been proved unfounded.

Occasional references were made to a second offender acting „with an intention shared by the principal defendant" in the indictment, the court proceedings and the right-wing newspapers. The proceedings made it seem most likely that this supposed second offender was identical with László G. László G. has recently had an accident and is presently lying in coma in a hospital in Strasbourg. Doctors say he is unlikely to be able to bear testimony, speak or look after himself even if he should ever become conscious again.[9]

Included among the exhibits is a baseball bat, which was handed over to the policemen by the Roma. They said it had been brought by the young people from Csákvár and had been used by them as a weapon in their attack on the gypsies who were woken up from their sleep by the sudden onslaught, in a state of extreme tension caused by the atmosphere of constant threat they had been living in.

In September 1999 the gypsy estate of Zámoly became a scene of arson. A fire was lit between two wooden cabins in the area where the gypsies had 'stored' the furniture and clothes of László G.'s family. The cabin used by Rudolf Krasznai and Friderika Kolompár was saved from complete destruction by sheer chance. The arsonists have not yet been identified.

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[9] László G. died on December 6, 2001, in Strasbourg.

In the autumn of 1999 the Zámoly gypsies became the target of several menacing messages. The anonymous letters arriving from all over the country – e.g. from Szeged or Miskolc – were handed over to Székesfehérvár police headquarters by Ibolya Krasznai, president of the local gypsy self-government.

Budapest, Csór – the Last Months of the Roma in Hungary

In October, 1999 the National Gypsy Self-Government moved the Zámoly Roma to a villa at 2 Törpe street in the 12th district of Budapest. (As we have indicated, the brick houses had not been built before the end of 1999, and the wooden cabins, which had been built partly from used materials, were unfit for the instalment of heating.) Zámoly authorities soon called on the Roma to register their departure from their original homes, and attempts were also made to declare their permanent addresses 'fictitious'. These attempts failed as a result of the intervention of legal defence organisations.

The owner of the villa in Buda – 'W.' – and his business had been in contact with the National Gypsy Self-Government, which was then lead by Flórián Farkas. Part of the property W. had bought was used by an elderly lady, a lonely pensioner, and attempts to have her moved out of the building had failed because she had a perfectly lawful right to live there. In late 1999, a special bargain was truck between W. and the National Gypsy Self-Government. The proprietor, W. allowed the self-government to use the house, free of charge, as temporary accommodation for homeless gypsy families, asking only for utility fees by the self-government. In exchange, the self-government was to create a 'nuisance' to the elderly lady in the form of the presence of Roma neighbours, which would, sooner or later, make W.'s unwanted tenant leave on terms dictated by him. In fact, there had been some tension between the elderly lady and families from Borsod-Abaúj county who lived in Törpe street earlier. However, with the Zámoly Roma the stratagem failed because the elderly lady soon made friends with them.

With the exception of the elderly Krasznai couple, the families were put up in one large hall on the ground floor, sleeping on cast iron bunk beds with wire mattresses. They could not bring any furniture or personal belongings and kept most of their clothes under the beds.

Once during their stay in the villa, the gypsy women were attacked by two young men shouting anti-gypsy slogans (the children were at school and the men were at work in the oil refinery of Százhalombatta.) Their neighbour called the police and protected Friderika Kolompár with her own body.

While the Zámoly Roma were staying in Budapest, agents of the National Security Bureau found out that a couple of young men in Csákvár had collected leftover explosives from World War II in the forest around Csákvár. Criminal proceedings were started against a young man studying at a secondary school in Székesfehérvár and the explosives were seized in time.

With the construction of the brick houses in Zámoly approaching completion, the National Gypsy Self-Government held a consecration ceremony at the Zámoly gypsy estate, which was recorded by television cameras. The keys were handed over to the gypsy families and the Catholic priest of Csákvár consecrated the buildings. (Zámoly is a Protestant village, but the Roma are Catholics.) Flórián Farkas announced the fact that he had made

an agreement with the Minister of the Interior of the Orbán government that a police station would be established in Zámoly to protect the Roma from further persecution, which had been their expressed wish.

Most of the various utensils left in the cabins and containers had disappeared in the meantime. The Roma estate had obviously been ransacked. According to information revealed by József Krasznai the Roma had by then decided not to move to Zámoly. They were worried about their own and their children's life and bodily integrity. In any case, they took the financial aid from Flórián Farkas, which was a gift additional to the keys to their flats.

In a televised statement a few days later the president of the National Gypsy Self-Government denied the news of a police station being about to be established in Zámoly and said it was a matter of everyone's own responsibility whether they would or would not move into the newly built brick houses in Zámoly.

The accommodation of the Zámoly Roma in Törpe street, in Budapest was terminated because of the completion of their new houses, but they had every reason not to move into them. In desperation, they moved, as a last resort, to József Krasznai's house in Csór. This house was built on mortgage from the National Savings Bank in the 1980s and József Krasznai found himself unable to pay the raised interest after his job in Székesfehérvár was wound up (and a transport company became bankrupt). Since the house itself was going to be sold at auction, the Roma moved into the agricultural outbuildings. Their situation became hopeless: discouraged from moving into their flats in Zámoly because of the constant threats, they could not find another habitable property anywhere else.

THE FINAL OUTCOME: STRASBOURG

After a spree at Easter, an inhabitant of Csór lost his money and personal documents, which he reported to his friends by saying he had been robbed. Some of these people, who had recently had their country cottage burgled, suggested that he might have been robbed by the 'murderous gypsies of Zámoly' who had moved back to Csór a few weeks before, and who were 'known by everyone' to lead a life of crime. They reported the Zámoly gypsies to the police, which was reported by the media. No examination started, however, because the lost valuables had been recovered in the meantime – a fact which was not reported by the media.

Spearheaded by Dezső Csete, mayor of Csór, who had become notorious for his anti-gypsy statements in the late 1980s, which he had never retracted (such as „all gypsies should be shot – with one bullet"), the local representative body prevented the Roma families from officially registering their residence in Csór. The local kindergarten and school refused to register their children. In a televised news programme the first man of the village stated „parasites like the Zámoly Roma are expelled even by animal communities".

Harassment at night in front of the Krasznais' house in Arany János street was a regular nocturnal occurrence. The walls of the house were decorated with swastikas and racist slogans. In May 2000, József Krasznai organised a press conference at his flat where he announced their decision to leave Hungary and ask for political asylum in a Western country.

Katalin Katz, a teacher at the social work department of Jerusalem University (one of the famous activists of movements for the rights of the Palestinians) had met Rudolf Krasznai and Friderika Kolompár during interviews she was making for a documentary on the Roma Holocaust. (The elderly couple are survivors from the Holocaust: Rudolf Krasznai was a forced labourer, while Friderika Kolompár, as a girl, was an inmate of the transfer camp in the castle prison of Komárom during the Holocaust. Several of their relatives, including Friderika's father, were deported to Auschwitz, and died or disappeared there.) Katalin Katz met József Krasznai in the spring of 2000 and offered him 4200 USD to support their escape.

József Krasznai had the applications translated into English by a translation office in Székesfehérvár. They hired a bus and went to France in July 2000, accompanied by a shooting crew of TV2 and Lajos Puporka, a journalist of *Népszava* who speaks excellent French.

The Krasznais had not told Katalin Katz, who was with them on the bus, about their true destination. She thought they were going to Canada through France. They only told her after they had crossed the border.

In an interview given to *Magyar Hírlap* (April 2001) Krasznai recalls the events in the following words:

"...Flórián Farkas said that no one was taking any responsibility for what might happen if the Roma moved to Zámoly.

After that there was nothing to negotiate about: I announced at a press conference on May 16, 2,000 that we are going to ask for political asylum abroad.

– *Who advised you to take this option?*

– Nobody. My son and I worked out the details of the journey and then we discussed it with Ibolya. It was her task to get the others to accept it. It wasn't an easy job because it is by no means exhilarating to face the prospect of an unsuccessful journey after three years of being tossed about.

– *Béla Osztojkán, vice president of the National Gypsy Self-Government thinks you can't have been able to organise such a journey all on your own.*

– We had to rent a bus and have our prospective Strasbourg complaint translated by a translation office in Székesfehérvár. An average citizen without special knowledge of political matters is able to do that. We had been organising tours to Auschwitz on the anniversaries of the Roma Holocaust and I had taken a study trip to the United States on an American government grant, and I had also taken part in the shooting of a TV report on gypsy emigrants in Canada.

– *How much money did you have for the travel expenses?*

– As a matter of fact, we didn't have any. The families had collected all their income, including the child benefits and the pensions, and I had put it into a post savings book at the post office in Csór. While we were making arrangements for our departure, I met Katalin Katz, a woman from Jerusalem who had been in contact with my parents as holocaust survivors. We received 4,000 dollars from her savings. But we didn't tell her we were going to Strasbourg. She thought we were going to Canada through France.

– *But you were also accompanied by a shooting crew of TV2 and Lajos Puporka, a journalist from Népszava.*

– Lajos Puporka had taken his secondary school degrees at a French school in Switzerland so he was coming along to help us as an interpreter. The TV crew had sworn secrecy until the following day."

On arriving in Strasbourg they drove to the European Court of Human rights where they personally handed in their application which described the persecution they had personally suffered and the wide-ranging discrimination to which Roma in Hungary are exposed.

Referring to the 1951 Geneva Convention, the Roma (almost 50 in number) also applied for political asylum in the French Republic. Most of the applicants were granted political asylum in March, 2001 or later. Two families were admitted on the ground of family reunification. One family is awaiting second instance decision after an appeal.[10] A few members of the Krasznai family went on to Canada in late 2000, thereby excluding themselves from the circle of beneficiaries under French refugee law.

In 2001 the European Court of Human Rights rejected their application in view of the fact that the Roma had not taken all the remedial steps available to them under Hungarian law before submitting an application at the Strasbourg Court.

In the classification commonly used by Hungarian Roma, the Zámoly Roma belong to the group of new- Indian or 'Vlach" (vlashicke) gypsies who speak Romany as their mother tongue and account for about 20 percent of the Roma population. They confess to be of the 'lovar' tribe within that group. (The origin of the term 'lovar' is debated. Some derive it from the Hungarian word 'ló' (meaning 'horse') and accordingly hold that it means 'horse-dealer'. Others trace it to the Romany word 'lovo' (plural 'love'), meaning 'money', in which case the word means 'moneyed/rich'. Eight or so percent of the Hungarian gypsy population speak a version of Romanian and are referred to as 'Boyash'. To distinguish Vlach gypsies from them, the latter are called 'kolompár' or 'leketár' gypsies (i.e. cattle bell makers and padlock makers, respectively) in Southern Trans-Danubia.)

[10] After successfully proving that they were in Zámoly at the time of the atrocities, Attila Lakatos and his companion, Henrietta Krasznai and their four children were granted asylum at second instance after an appeal, in January 2002. Melinda Lakatos, who had returned to Hungary for a short period a year earlier, was also granted asylum.

In November, 2001, József Lakatos, or Szibbaj, and his companion Piroska Lakatos, Muki, and their seven children also arrived in Strasbourg and were given political asylum. On March 6, 2002, however, before OFPRA delivered its decision, they returned to Hungary, bringing Melinda Lakatos and János Lakatos, already political refugees, with them.

The Migration of Roma as Reflected in the Hungarian Press [1]

By Bognár Katalin and Kováts András

In this paper we summarise the results of a media research project which we conducted at the request of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The aim of the project was to capture and record the way in which the migration of Eastern European Roma was presented by the Hungarian printed and electronic press during the 37 months between early September 1997 and late September 2000.

Sources. In our work we relied on the collection of sources compiled by the press monitoring team of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman for Civil Rights. The news sources included in the data base[2] (33 dailies, 14 weeklies, bi-weeklies or monthlies and 12 television and radio programmes) are listed in the *Supplement*. Before carrying out the research project, we surveyed the press collection of the Branch Office Hungary of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the years 1998 and 1999.

Method. We selected from the data base all news items which included terms linked with Roma migration. This yielded a total of 727 reports for the data base specifically restricted to the topic of Roma migration. We analysed the news materials thus selected under two aspects: we examined their distribution as news sources and their distribution in time *(quantitative analysis)*, while we also focused on a few features of its content *(content or qualitative analysis)*. The latter approach involved an examination of the kind of context in which the news reports were set, whether, in addition to a simple reporting of facts, they conveyed any value judgements relating to Roma, migration or the persons involved in or affected by it.

The project was carried out in two phases: in spring and autumn of the year 2000. During the first phase we surveyed the news items published between September 1997 and January 2000 (totalling 272); during the second we processed the news materials reported between February and September 2000 (a total of 501 items). The results of the press analyses relating to the two periods are reproduced in the first subsection.

Having got acquainted with the results, we came to the conclusion that it was more revealing to depart from the aforementioned division into phases and to cut up the 37 month-period in a different way. The reason for this decision was the fact that the departure of the Zámoly Roma had completely transformed the media representation of Roma migration.

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[1] This project was preceded by a research report prepared for the IOM. The research was carried out and the research report was compiled in collaboration with Dorka Sik.

[2] The data base has been run since the autumn of the year 1996.

Treating this event as a turning point, we divided the total data base (727 items) into two parts: a first period lasting from September 1997 till July 23, 2000, and a second phase beginning on July 23 and ending in September 2000.

In several cases, however, it was impossible to decide with full certainty what exactly should be counted as the features of the content of the news items. This was the case with items from the electronic media which were available only in the form of detailed extracts from the words spoken rather than the entire audio-visual richness of the material. We therefore decided to include only the 545 articles published in the printed press in the comparative analysis of content. The results of this analysis are summarised in the second subsection.

We would also like to draw attention to a chronological survey of the printed and electronic press news materials relating to Roma migration which embraces a longer period of time, and which is able to serve as a more comprehensive and illustrative background to the data published in the present article.[3]

THE RESULTS OF MEDIA RESEARCH IN THE TWO PERIODS EXAMINED

The two phases of the media research project, then, embrace two periods, the first beginning in September 1997 and ending in January 2000, and the second extending from February to September 2000. The research itself consisted in the quantitative and content analysis of the news items which became public in the two periods.

The Presentation of Roma Migration in the Media Between September 1997 and January 2000

The quantitative analysis of the 226 news items published during the 29 months revealed that the Hungarian media devoted very little space to Roma migration. We found only one or two news items a month and there was an uninterrupted period of eight months during which no news on Roma migration was published at all. The average index of eight news items per month is a result of two brief periods which were packed with news on our topic.

- The first exceptional period was April-May 1998. This was the time when Jiri Kubes' statement became public, in which he predicted that several thousand Hungarian Roma would emigrate in the immediate future.[4] The news items published in this period were reactions to this statement. Most of them tried to refute the claim made by the Slovak-born Canadian attorney, and described those encouraging the Roma to emigrate as irresponsible.
- The second exceptional period began in December 1998 with the debate concerning certificates of descent and ended in February 1999 with reports on the invitation to Canada

[3] "The Chronology of Roma Migration as Based on Reports in the Hungarian Press Between June 1997 and April 2001" (henceforward 'Chronology'), see *Appendix* in the present volume, pp. 180–194.

[4] See Chronology pp. 181–182.

of Hungarian experts and the resolutions of the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board which were described as precedent-setting.[5]

Content analysis showed that the presentation of Roma migration in the media was dominated by brief and neutral reports of facts rather than investigative journalism illustrated reports or interviews of some length.

Roma migration came to acquire news value when it had some effect on internal or foreign affairs or relations. In these cases there was a more profuse coverage of migration in the media, but even then the emphasis was on the likely effect of migration rather than on what it was or why it was happening.

Reports that approached the topic from the vantage point of foreign policy dealt with the question of Hungary's accession to the European Union, the attitude of source countries and compulsory visas.

Most of the news items were of relevance to domestic politics and emphasised this aspect. In the majority of these reports ministry or government officials were denying the problem of migration, claiming that there was nothing to be alarmed about in view of the meagre extent of Roma emigration, while reassuring those concerned and interest representation organisations of the government's cooperative attitude.

As far as persons mentioned or quoted in the reports are concerned, associates of Roma interest protection organisations (and minority local self-governments) and ministry officials dominated the scene as opposed to Roma migrants (i.e. persons directly affected), who scarcely appeared in the news.

More than 50% of the reports said that there was a background of political persecution, discrimination and fear of atrocities, to emigration. One third of the items mentioned economic reasons and poor living conditions while a bleak future as the main reason for emigration was mentioned in one tenth of the items.

No attempt was made by the media to present the life of the emigrating Roma, with only sporadic reports of particular cases.

The majority of the reports gave no data concerning the proportions of the migration. The epithet 'massive' was used with reference to migration from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, while migration from Hungary was classed as 'below a thousand' and 'not considerable'. In fact, emigration among the Czech and Slovak Roma was of greater proportions in the period examined, but the rhetoric of reports on Hungarian migration was clearly aimed at belittling its importance ('one or two families', 'a negligible number').

Media reports were cast in a neutral tone almost without exception. We came across very few reports with an underlying approach of commitment to the Roma' point of view, but we did not find any inflammatory, anti-Roma utterances until January 2000.

The Presentation of Roma Migration in the Media Between February and September 2000

The quantitative analysis of the 501 news items collected in the 8-month period yielded the following results:

[5] See Chronology pp. 182–183.

• no significant shift from the previous period could be detected, with only a few reports on Roma migration;

• the number of relevant news items grew in May and June, being partly new reports on the migration to Canada, partly reports of the increasing number of statements made by József Krasznai, the leading personality of the Zámoly Roma community, to the effect that the only conceivable solution to their problem seemed to be emigration;

• July 23 is the turning point: the Zámoly Roma went to Strasbourg submitting a complaint at the European Court of Human Rights and applying for refugee status in France. As a result, news items about Roma migration (predominantly the case of the Zámoly Roma) soared to unprecedented heights: with 74 items devoted to the topic only during the last week of June (we came across 30 reports during the half year between February and July 23);

• the number of news items about Roma migration grew to 272 in August, a number which almost equals the total of news reports devoted to Roma migration during the three previous years;

• media interest in Roma migration had slightly decreased by September, but there were still 126 items on the issue.

Overall, the increase in the number of reports as compared with the first period is clearly enormous. The average value is 63 news items per month. 74 of which are concentrated in the last week of July, while for the last two months the average lies at 199 items per month.

A striking feature of the results of content analysis is the lack of any attempt on the part of the media to furnish viewers, listeners and readers with some information about the three-year ordeal of the Zámoly Roma[6] so that they could interpret what they were now reading or hearing as the final outcome of a lengthy process. Most items, however, did not recapitulate what had happened before, or took it for granted that media consumers were familiar with the prehistory, or – what is more likely – did not consider a retrospective let alone an *evaluation* of what was happening as crucial.

The departure of the Zámoly Roma was given a prominent place in almost all news sources. After some time mentioning 'the Zámoly Roma' or simply 'the Zámolyers' had an independent force of its own: hearing the phrase, everyone – journalists, newsreaders, reporters as well as media consumers automatically thought of the group of Roma who applied for asylum in France.

The Zámoly affair elicited responses from almost the entire spectrum of Hungarian political life and the general public. The Zámoly affair was often only a 'sub-plot' to a discussion of the situation of Roma in general, but it was mostly the central topic of news reports.

József Krasznai was an emblematic figure of the period, being portrayed in the beginning as the leader of the emigrant group, later as their representative (at domestic and foreign public fora), and, for some time at least, as a patron and spokesman for other Roma communities contemplating emigration.

The subject of Roma migration in general – especially those applying for refugee status in Canada – remained topical, whether as an undercurrent of the Zámoly affair or for its own sake (see the data for September).

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[6] See the article by István Hell, in this volume pp. 97–112.

A Comparative Quantitative Analysis of the Media Presentation of Roma Migration

The breakdown of news items relating to Roma migration in the two periods examined according to news sources is shown in *Figure 1*. While the printed press clearly predominates in both periods, the contribution of the electronic press shows marked growth in the second period as compared with the first (from 16 to 29%).

Although not shown in the graph, the share of the four great major national dailies *(Magyar Hírlap, Magyar Nemzet, Népszabadság, Népszava)* in the publication of news materials continues to be significant in the second period (30%), although smaller than in the previous one (40%). The difference can be explained by greater activity on the part of the electronic media in the second period.

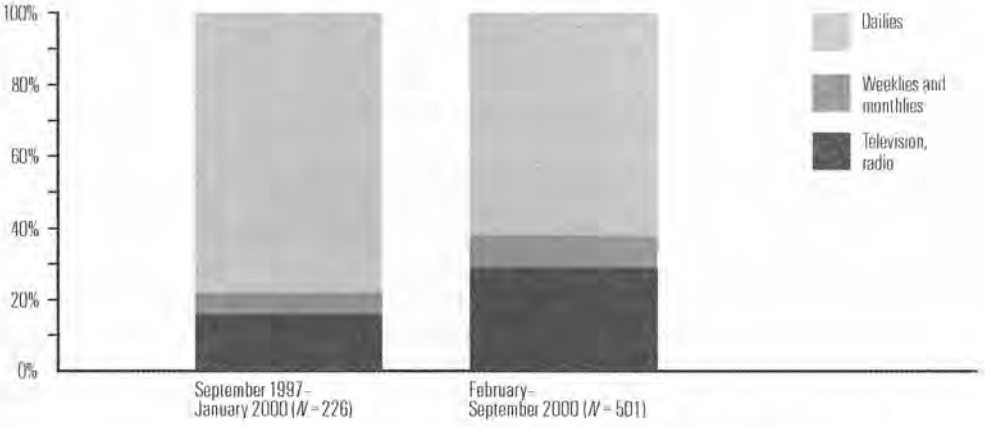


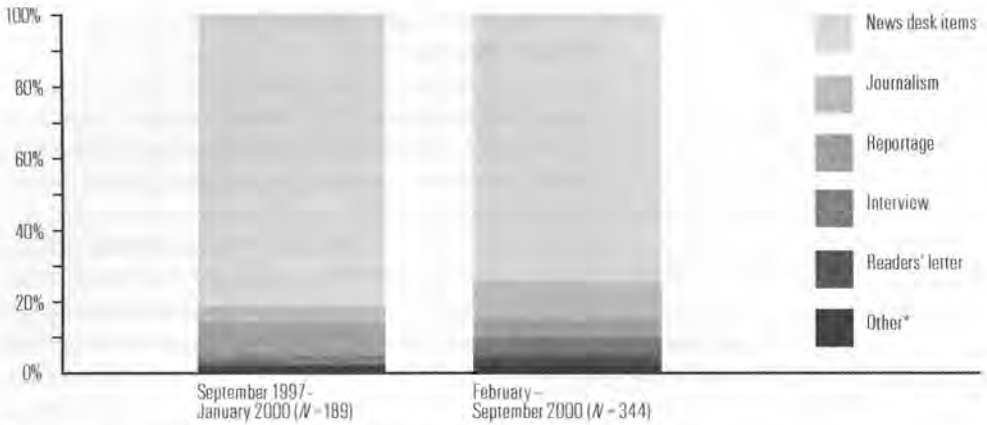
Figure 1

The breakdown of news sources in the period examined; percentage

Other newspapers with an outstanding share in the coverage include *Fejér Megyei Hírlap* and the weekly *Demokrata*, each of them accounted for 4% of the media presentation of Roma migration in the second period.

The breakdown of printed news items according to genres is shown in *Figure 2*. Newsreel items account for the majority in both periods (81 and 75%), with a slight decrease in the second. Besides a growth in the proportion of journalism (from 4 to 10%) and of interviews, the second period also marks the appearance of a new genre: readers' letters. The number of these (a total of 11) clearly indicates that Roma migration had aroused the interest of the general public.[7]

[7] The appearance of readers' letters indicates not only the fact that readers became interested in Roma migration but also, or even more, the fact that the problem had become important enough for editors to find such letters worth publishing.



* Commentaries, chronologies and other, unclassifiable writings.

Figure 2

The breakdown of news materials in the printed press according to genres; percentage

The size of the articles in the printed press did not change, on the whole: short news reports accounted for the majority in both periods, and investigative reports or commentaries were rather infrequent. Over 70% of what was printed on the topic was shorter than 300 words, and 30% of it was shorter than 150 words.

No significant change could be detected in the distribution of the original sources of the reports, either: in the second period, 60% of the news materials came from the staff of the newspapers themselves (at 53% in the previous period), while 29% came from MTI[8] (at 27% in the first period).The Roma Press Centre as a source of news lost some of its share in the second period, being referred to only five times altogether (1%), while previously their contribution amounted to 10%. The remaining 10% of the articles relied on news of foreign news agencies and of other newspapers in both periods.

As we found over twice as many news items on Roma migration in the second, shorter period (8 months)[9] than in the first one (29 months), we cannot maintain our earlier claim that the media showed no interest in Roma migration. In a different perspective, of course, one could say that the majority of the news items reported the details and development of a specific case, i.e. the Zámoly affair – a fact which will be discussed later on –, and thus gave no unambiguous ground for a conclusion as to a growing interest in Roma migration in general.

As we mentioned in our analysis of the data of the particular periods, the second period showed an eightfold increase in the number of news reports (see 8 as opposed to 63 per month). In the second period, one could come across news on Roma migration twice a day on average in the Hungarian media. The same number rose to 15 a day in the most intensive

[8] Magyar Távirati Iroda, i.e. Hungarian News Agency.

[9] 90% of which was found within a period of roughly two months.

period, i.e. the second week of August. *Chart 1* and *Figure 3* present the changes in the number and distribution of news reports in a weekly breakdown for the second period.[10]

Chart 1

The number of news reports in a weekly breakdown between the twentieth* and the thirty-ninth week** (*N = 500*)

Week	Number of news reports	Week	Number of news reports
20.	7	**30.**	73
21.	6	**31.**	60
22.	1	**32.**	103
23.	5	**33.**	49
24.	6	**34.**	57
25.	1	**35.**	11
26.	3	**36.**	22
27.	1	**37.**	11
28.	0	**38.**	33
29.	0	**39.**	52

* The twentieth week is the one beginning with May 19.
** The thirty-ninth week is the one beginning with September 30.

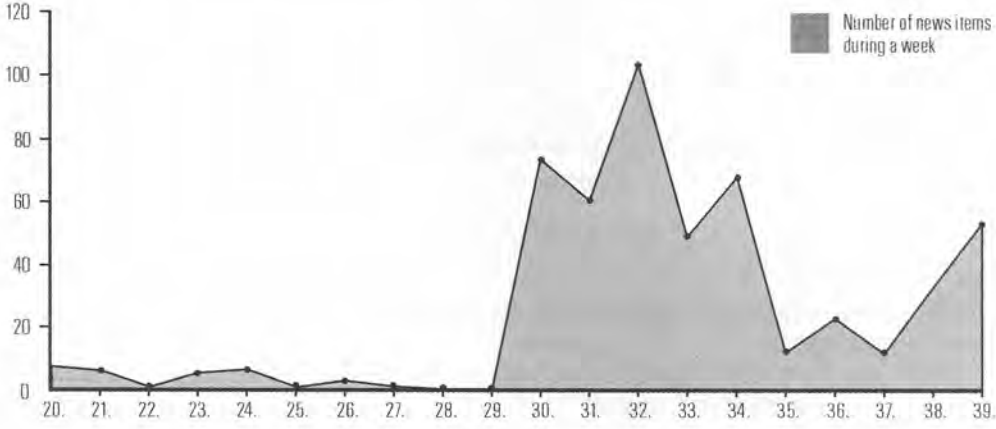


Figure 3

The distribution of news reports in a weekly breakdown between the twentieth and the thirty-ninth week; absolute number (*N = 501*)

[10] As we did not find any news reports on Roma migration between February 1 and May 18, we present the data from the twentieth week.

THE RESULTS OF THE COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS ACCORDING TO THE NEW PERIODIC DIVISION

For purposes of a further content analysis of news materials we divided the three-year period into two stretches of time: the one before July 23, 2000 and the one after. The departure of the Zámoly Roma made a crucial change in the migration of Hungarian Roma communities and, obviously, in its presentation in the press. Their application for refugee status had carried an unmistakable political message (both to Roma in Hungary and to the majority society).

> "In response to our question, Krasznai, a leader or member of the presidential board of several domestic Roma advocacy organisations, admitted that he was pursuing political goals in organising the Roma's journey to Strasbourg. – By making arrangements for a massive emigration of Roma I want to exert pressure on the Orbán government so that it will change its policy which is disadvantageous for the poor – he commented. According to Krasznai the government should create special funds worth at least 200 billion HUF to be spent on the education of Roma and for the creation of jobs for them." (*Népszabadság*, August 3, 2000).

> "In an open letter, Józseef Krasznai, vice president of the Hungarian Roma Parliament addressed Hungarian Roma communities in the name of the Zámoly Roma who had left for Strasbourg. The letter concludes with the exclamation »Rise, gypsies!« and states that Hungarian gypsies have been persecuted for several hundreds of years. According to the writer »we must not watch idly as the Hungarian governments and their gypsy servants physically and mentally destroy our people. If the Hungarian government does not immediately take steps to prevent the racist persecution of the Roma and take part in the negative campaign that is on against them, if it does not guarantee our economic, cultural and political rights, if political parties are unable to undertake to represent our interests, we will have no other choice left than to leave our beloved country on a massive scale.«" (*Magyar Demokrata*, September 14, 2000).

Although the 'gypsy awakening' and massive exodus envisioned by József Krasznai has not (yet) materialised, emigration to Canada has doubled[11] and several Roma communities in the country (in Ózd, Mosonmagyróvár, Körmend), which were previously 'dormant', began considering the idea of leaving the country.

Roma migration and the general situation of Roma became a constant point of debate between the government and interest representation organisations as well as in party controversies.

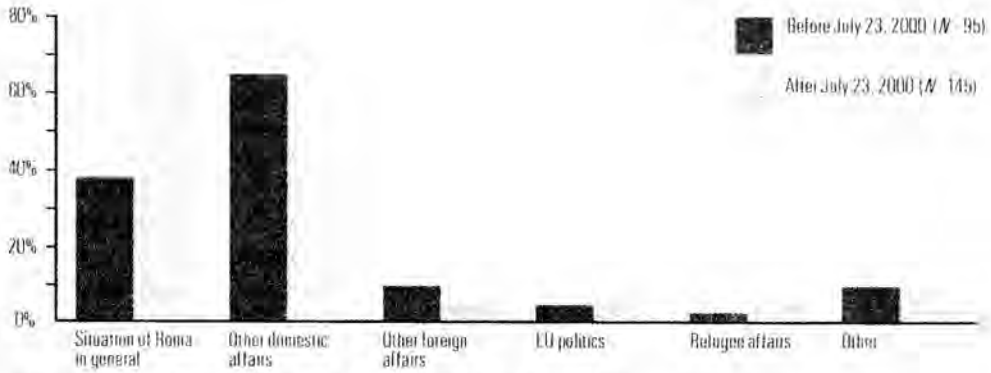
As we indicated at the beginning of our study, the comparative content analysis based on the new periodic division relied only on news materials published in the printed press, i.e. on 545 articles news items. 39% of these (210 articles) was published before the departure of the Zámoly Roma on July 23, 2000, 61% (335 articles) after that event.

[11] Cf. The data given in Kovàts' article (pp. 17–18).

In the period following the departure of the Zámoly Roma 88% of the articles relating to Roma migration discussed the emigration of the Zámoly group. This event was placed at the centre of 41% of these items (it was their main 'plot'), while it was mentioned as additional to some other topic ('sub-plot') in 47%. The remaining part of the articles (12%) discussed some aspect of Roma migration which is independent of this fact. These proportions confirmed the justification for the re-drawing of periods : the departure of the Zámoly group was, indeed, a turning point in the domestic history of Roma migration.

Roma migration in general (which naturally encompasses the Zámoly affair) was the primary 'plot' of news items to a similar extent in both periods: 55% (115 news reports) before the departure of the Roma, 57% (190 news items) after it.

Accordingly, Roma migration as a secondary thread was mentioned by 45 and 43% of the articles, respectively (95 articles before, 145 after the departure of the Roma). *Figure 4* shows the main topic in cases in which Roma migration was the secondary topic. It reveals the change clearly: while before the departure of the Zámoly group Roma migration cropped up as a topic secondary to some news on domestic politics,[12] it was mentioned in the context of the general situation of Roma after the event.



Note: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

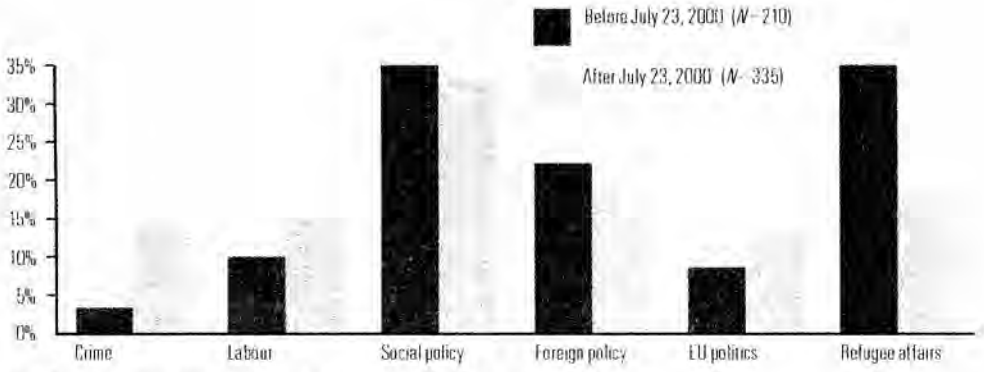
Figure 4

Topics forming the main thread of articles when Roma migration is treated as a secondary thread;
expressed as the percentage of articles mentioning Roma migration as a secondary thread

When examining all the articles (207 before, 338 after the departure of the Roma) in terms of the other topic with which Roma migration was combined in them, we found further conspicuous shifts of emphasis (*Figure 5*).

It is evident that Roma migration was more frequently mentioned together with crime after the departure of the Zámoly Roma than before. This is explained by the spread of the

12 Mainly related to the debate on certificates of descent.



Note: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

Figure 5

Other topics combined with the topic of Roma migration;
expressed as a percentage of all the articles

rumour around the time that some of the Roma applying for asylum in France may have been involved in some way in the death of the young man of Csákvár who was fatally injured in the fight in Zámoly in August, 2000.[13]

> "The legal representative for the aggrieved acting on behalf of the family of the young man of Csákvár killed in the Zámoly fight submitted a petition at the French Embassy on Thursday. The legal representative, Attila Monostory told us the petition informs the French Embassy that an unidentified joint offender in the homicide as well as presumed joint offenders in the affray may be among the Zámoly Roma who are presently staying in Strasbourg. He submitted the petition in order to prevent the affair from unfavourably influencing the international reputation of Hungary, he said. He is going to inform the European Commission of Human Rights about the affair in a few days, he added. At the aggrieved family's request, he has recently submitted a proposal for a supplementary investigation." (*Népszava*, September 29, 2000).

For obvious reasons, the topic of Roma migration was more frequently brought into connection with the European Union in the second phase. Before the departure of the Zámoly Roma, it was, at most, the (supposed) effect of emigration on Hungary's accession to the European Union that was discussed by the press. The case of the Zámoly Roma, however, being a multifaceted European affair, upset those proportions: the citizens of a state awaiting accession to the Union had asked for asylum in a member state of the European Union, submitting even a complaint about the Hungarian state at the European Court of Human Rights.[14] This, of course, had a resounding impact on domestic politics: 53% of the articles

[13] For more information on this point see Hell, in this volume (pp. ??)

[14] Although the European Court of Human Rights does not belong to the institutional framework of the European Union, Hungarian public opinion and the media in Hungary tend to ignore the difference between the institutions of the European Union and those of the Council of Europe.

published in the second period included discussions of some topic in domestic politics.[15] The refugee problem as a secondary topic combined with Roma migration was less frequent, even the complaint of the Zámoly Roma submitted at the European Court of Human Rights being more frequently discussed than their application for asylum. The complaint at the Court was especially frequent in headlines in the days immediately after their departure, occasionally with misleading connotations:

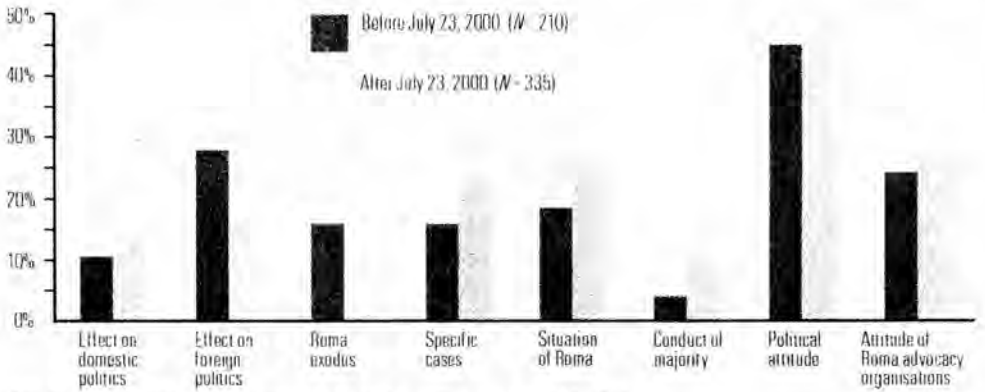
"Roma sue the Hungarian state in Strasbourg." (*Magyar Nemzet*, July 25, 2000)

"Escaping Roma submit complaint – Strasbourg application fails to meet legal preconditions." (*Népszava*, July 27, 2000)

The media rather frequently treated the two topics as one. As a result, the average reader had difficulty in finding out that the two were not identical, indeed, had no relevant legal or administrative connection with each other. Not unlike other 'scoops' exploited for the temporary excitement they offer, the story of the Zámoly Roma was transformed into a single, whole narrative which could be recalled into readers' memories with the help of a few key words[16] without having to be, even sketchily, or fragmentarily, recapitulated.

If we examine the aspects of the Roma migration which became the focus of of interest in the articles, we find further changes in the period following July 23, 2000 *(Figure 6)*.

Whether discussing statements by ministry or government officials or those of Roma advocacy organisations, most of the articles continued to emphasise the political aspect.



Note: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

Figure 6

Aspect of Roma migration in the focus of the articles;
expressed as a percentage of all articles*

[15] Since domestic politics as an independent topic was not included in our previous analysis, we have no data for comparison regarding the changes, yet exactly because we had not included it among the variables of the earlier analysis, it can be presumed not to have figured prominently.

[16] Such key words included 'the Zámoly affair", 'the example of the Zámoly group', 'the Strasbourg Roma' etc.

At stake in the debate was usually the question: are the gypsies persecuted in present-day Hungary or aren't they, i.e. is the Zámoly Roma's application for asylum well-founded or not? It is worth drawing attention to two interesting aspects: firstly to the fact that the debate was unleashed not so much by the application for refugee status as by the complaint submitted at the European Court of Human Rights. The event clearly has a symbolic dimension: a great number of complaints are submitted at the Strasbourg Court every year, but now the Zámoly Roma represented – in József Krasznai's words – the entirety of the Roma community in Hungary: This was tacitly understood by everyone in Hungarian politics and political public opinion. The other peculiar feature was the fact that the protagonists of Hungarian political life rarely said anything about the specific problems of the Zámoly Roma or the chances of success for their application for refugee status despite the fact that the procedure of refugee law requires proof of persecution or well-founded fear of persecution in terms of happenings at the level of the individual's or the community's life.

As a result of the departure of the Zámoly Roma the proportion of articles dealing with particular cases and the situation of the Roma in general increased, and the members of the majority commented more often than they did before. At the same time, there was a significant decrease in the number of news items devoted to the topic of a Roma exodus – a phrase often used previously with reference to neighbouring countries – after the Zámoly affair, and the same applies to the topic of the effect of Roma migration on foreign policy.

Associates of Roma interest protection organisations and ministry officials continued to make up the overwhelming majority of the persons who commented on the affair in the press. Although the Zámoly case is richly documented, indeed, the Roma emigrants (those directly affected) are hardly given a chance to say what they think. József Krasznai himself, in the beginning, was quoted as a member of the Fejér County Independent Gypsy Alliance or of some unidentified interest protection organisation, whereas later he was quoted without any indication of a title or as a representative of the Zámoly Roma and was emphatically described as not an emigrant himself.

The peculiar double attitude discussed in our earlier analysis can be clearly sensed in the statements made by associates of Roma interest protection organisations. On the one hand, they were unrelentingly warning the Roma to avoid emigration as much as possible, trying to dissuade them. (At the same time József Krasznai was making further travel arrangements, collecting donations, but he was recommending emigration only to those who would be able to provide proof of their grievances.) On the other hand, Roma migration was being used as a means of calling attention to the general situation of the Roma, poor social conditions, unemployment and discrimination.

By contrast, government officials at this time can be seen as trying to play down the problems in general: billions of HUF are 'found' in the state budget to fund large-scale action that would bring the Roma up to the average level, long-term schemes for the Roma population are mentioned, the Minority Act is discussed and there are references to the efforts made by governments in the previous decade to alleviate the problems faced by the Roma population. There were also several comments of condemnation and stigmatisation, even from ministers. Bringing disrepute to the country is the accusation most often levelled at the Zámoly Roma emigrants. Csaba Hende, state secretary of the Ministry of Justice was

especially active in this style of public comment. The appearance of the topic of Roma migration and the situation of the Roma in parliamentary speeches and contributions and party press releases was a new development.[17]

"According to the presidium of the Hungarian Socialist Party the affair of the Zámoly Roma would not have lead to such a state of affairs if the openly disfavouring policy of the government toward the underprivileged had not been encouraging local governments to get rid of their own poor, primarily the gypsies." (*Népszava*, July 26, 2000)

"According to [Csaba Tabajdi] the Hungarian Socialist Party politician specialising in minority affairs, it is impermissible for the Hungarian government to carry on as if nothing had happened when the problem requires sorting out at the international level as well as negotiating with the Roma themselves." (*Magyar Hírlap*, September 27, 2000)

"According to his [the state secretary of the Ministry of Justice's] presentation the cabinet is spending 7,2 billion HUF this year on improving the situation of the Roma population, 4,86 billion of which will be spent on the implementation of specific mid-term goals. At the committee meeting Csaba Hende firmly denied accusations that the Gypsy population in Hungary is being persecuted." (*Dunaújvárosi Hírlap*, September 19, 2000)[18]

There was a significant shift in terms of the "source" and "target" countries mentioned in the articles. Hungary was undoubtedly in the focus as a source country in the previous period but the exodus of Czech and Slovakian Roma was also frequently covered by the press. In the second period, this was rather rare (see *Chart 2*).

Chart 2

The distribution of source countries in the two periods
expressed as a percentage of references*

Country	Before July 23, 2000 ($N = 265$)	After July 23, 2000 ($N = 357$)
Hungary	68	95
Czech Republic	18	1
Slovakia	9	3
Other	5	1
Total	*100*	*100*

* *Note*: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

[17] See the contributions in Parliament collected in the present volume (pp. 148–179) and the chronological collection of press materials (pp. 180–194)

[18] This piece of news was reported by four other country dailies.

The shift in focus on target countries is even more spectacular, as a result, undoubtedly, of the Zámoly affair: France took over the role of number one target country from Canada (*Chart 3*).

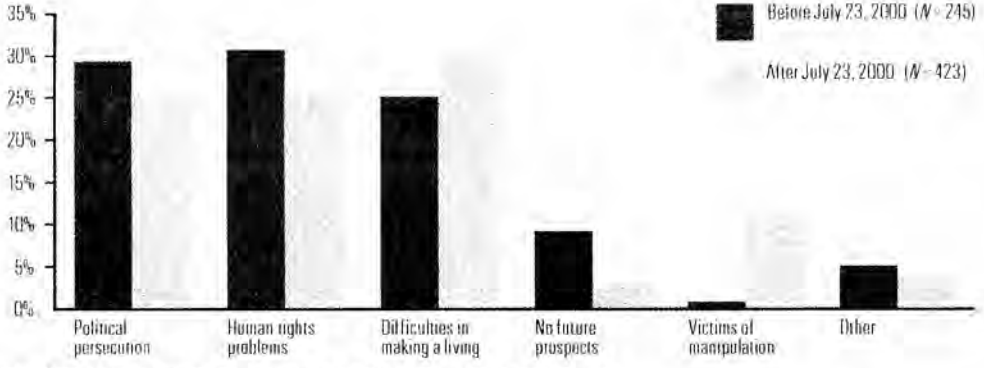
Chart 3

Distribution of target countries in the two periods;
expressed as a percentage of all references*

Country	Before July 23, 2000 ($N = 247$)	After July 23, 2000 ($N = 341$)
France	–	86
Canada	84	11
Great Britain	8	1
Finland	2	1
Other	6	1
Total	*100*	*100*

* *Note*: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

In both periods, over 50% of the articles spoke of political persecution, human rights problems and fear of atrocities as the deeper motivation behind emigration (*Figure 7*). Reference to economic reasons, i.e. difficulties in making a living, shows more or less similar proportions. There is also a new motif after the departure of the Zámoly Roma: the persons speaking or quoted in the articles describe the Roma as victims of political manipulation. More than 10% of the references to motivations are of this kind.



Note: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

Figure 7

Distribution of putative reasons for Roma migration;
expressed as a percentage of all articles

Both public and political actors often express doubt concerning the genuinity of the Roma's intentions and describe them with the slightly derogatory phrase 'economic migrant' more often than they did in the previous period.

> "Unfortunately, the social-political transformation took place without the participation of the Roma population, and the best we can say about it is that the Roma just 'underwent' it without enjoying any of its advantages. The departure of the Zámoly Roma was a result of poverty, evacuations, social insecurity and unemployment. Although it is difficult to agree with their decision, it is impossible not to understand it if one comes to think of the fact that not even the leaders of the Gypsy community, the members of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government did anything for them." (*Napló*, August 4, 2000)

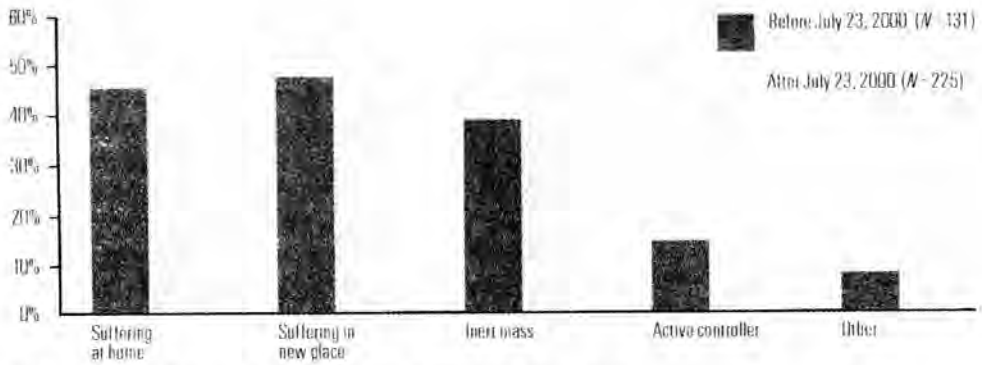
> "The unsympathetic, trifling attitude of the authorities, the prejudices against them, the failure of the father's businesses as well as the fight for prestige within the Roma community may all have contributed to their decision to emigrate." (*Magyar Hírlap*, September 6, 2000)

It must be noted that some of the reports on Roma migration inform us of individuals or groups who are considering emigration rather than actual migration. Cases of this kind – most frequently the intention of Roma living in Ózd, Körmend and Mosonmagyaróvár to emigrate or flee – are mentioned, almost invariably, in connection with the Zámoly Roma. We found 13 news items with such references in the spring during the period before July 23, 2000, while the period after yielded 70 such news items, which makes up 21% of all the articles published in that period.

There was a striking increase, after July 23, 2000, in the number of articles which conveyed rather a negative picture of the migrating Roma or reported the negative, disparaging opinions of others. Descriptions of the emigrants as fraudulent, malicious or even criminal, or recapitulations (occasionally analyses) of disparaging statements made by others occurred in 18% of the articles on the Roma (*Figure 8*).

Prejudiced and anti-Roma writing on the topic of migration has not been uncommon in the press since the departure of the Zámoly Roma. In defining a 'prejudiced attitude' we decided for an interpretation of the term which is rather narrower than that used in other analyses of the presentation of Roma in the press, treating as prejudiced only openly hostile, depreciatory and stigmatising articles in which the opinion was the writer's own or the writer was clearly approving of someone else's opinion. By contrast, we did not treat as prejudiced any reports of the anti-Roma opinions of others, mater-of-fact interviews conducted with people of strongly prejudiced minds, nor did we include cases in which the context itself might have carried some prejudiced message (such as is provided by one and the same article reporting both the every-day life of the Zámoly Roma and József Krasznai being summoned to appear in court in some civil suit, or the police investigation concerning the death of the young man of Csákvár who was killed in Zámoly in the summer of 1999). The distribution of the articles in terms of their tone is shown in *Chart 4*.

The writings which were deemed prejudiced had been published in twelve national and county dailies and in three weeklies. The weekly *Demokrata* and the daily *Magyar Nemzet*



Note: One article may discuss several topics so the total percentage may exceed a hundred.

Figure 8

Distribution of the images of Roma suggested by news reports;
expressed as a percentage of all articles

Chart 4

Distribution of the articles in terms of tone;
expressed as a percentage of all references*

Tone	**Before July 23, 2000** ($N = 208$)	**After July 23, 2000** ($N = 335$)
Committed to the Roma	7	8
Neutral, matter-of-fact	93	82
Prejudiced	–	10
Total	*100*	*100*

accounted for the greatest share of such articles, with 24 and 21%, respectively. The analysis of press reports undertaken by the Monitor Group of the Publicity Club identified a great many more press reports as prejudiced.[19]

Expository journalism accounted for the greatest percentage of these articles (40%), followed by readers' letters (27%). Nine out of the eleven readers' letters published in the period examined were found to be prejudiced and anti-Roma.

Often the titles 'spoke for themselves':

"They will come back and kiss the earth." (*Fejér Megyei Hírlap*, August 9, 2000)

"The Roma and the protectors of pseudo-interests – comment on the affair of the Zámoly gypsies clamouring in Strasbourg." (*Dunaújvárosi Hírlap*, August 14, 2000)

[19] See in the present volume, pp. 131–137.

"The money for the gypsies is coming from Jerusalem" and "It's all over between us". (*Magyar Fórum*, August 17, 2000)

"Gypsies embark on state-subsidised journey" (*Magyar Nemzet*, September 7, 2000)

The charges most often voiced in prejudiced articles include the following: the Roma are too lazy to work or study (42%), they are being funded and instigated by Jews or leftist liberals (42%), they are making unfounded claims for money and social benefits (36%), they are bringing the country into disrepute (36%), they are murderers (30%), they are receiving housing from the state undeserved (27%).

They are exemplified by the following quotation from a right-wing newspaper:

"Both our printed and electronic press have been bombarding and teasing the majority population with the 'calvary' of the Zámoly gypsies for two years incessantly, while fraudulently distorting, or simply concealing the fact that these 'persecuted' persons had houses built for them partly on state subsidies and with the help of the National Gypsy Self-Government in a place in the village of Zámoly where they beat to death a Hungarian youth who had gone there. Nor is any word written about the fact that these brave gypsies carrying their cross have not the slightest intention of shortening their own calvary by regular work or study. Instead, they get on a bus and go to Strasbourg where they tell an assembly of cameramen that the Hungarians, even the Hungarian government is racist and anti-Roma." (*Magyar Fórum*, August 7, 2000)

The reasonably committed articles appeared in eleven national and county dailies and in two weeklies and monthlies. The greatest number of articles of this kind were published in *Népszava* and *Magyar Hírlap* (nine and eight times, respectively). Most of them were examples of expository journalism (34%) and interviews and news (22 % both).

It can no longer be said that the press is not interested in Roma migration. At the same time, our initial hypothesis – that the topic of Roma migration can count on media interest only if it is linked with some sensational or momentous event – seems to be borne out. The peculiarity of the situation is that this time the sensational event is the migration of the Roma themselves, or rather of a small community of Roma with a long history of hardship.

The story and its latest turn since the research project was completed – the recognition of the Zámoly Roma as refugees –has had and will continue to have a great impact on political life in this country and on the attitudes of other Roma communities to migration.

This event, a reminder of unprecedented strength concerning the situation of Roma in Hungary, has spawned a wide-ranging political, social and expert debate. At the same time, it has also lead to stronger expressions of exclusionary and racist opinions in the Hungarian press, which is far from surprising in light of our previous knowledge of public opinion and political rhetoric.[20]

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[20] See Kováts' analysis of the opinions of the population on Roma migration (pp. 138–145) and the compilation of speeches and comments in Parliament in the *Appendix* (pp. 148–179).

SUPPLEMENT

The research project was based on news materials published by the following organs of printed and electronic press (arranged in alphabetical order):

Dailies: *24 Óra, Békés Megyei Hírlap, Békés Megyei Nap, Blikk, Déli Hírlap, Délmagyarország, Délvilág, Dunaújvárosi Hírlap, Észak-Magyarország, Fejér Megyei Hírlap, Hajdú-Bihari Napló, Heves Megyei Hírlap, Kelet-Magyarország, Kisalföld, Kurir, Magyar Hírlap, Magyar Nemzet, Mai Nap, Metro, Napi Gazdaság, Napi Magyarország, Népszabadság, Népszava, Nógrád Megyei Hírlap, Petőfi Népe, Somogyi Hírlap, Tolnai Népújság, Új Dunántúli Napló, Új Magyarország, Új Néplap, Vas Népe, Világgazdaság, Zalai Hírlap.*

Weeklies, bi-weeklies, and monthlies: *168 Óra, Amaro Drom, Élet és Irodalom, Hócipő, HVG, Képes Újság, Magyar Demokrata, Magyar Fórum, Magyar Narancs, Napló, Reform, Színes Vasárnap, Új Demokrata, Vasárnapi Hírek.*

Electronic press: Radio Danubius, Duna Tv, Radio Juventus, Radio Kossuth, MTV1, MTV2, Radio Petőfi, Radio Sláger, Radio Bridge, RTL Klub, TV2, TV3.

Reason or Abandonment

Report of the Monitoring Group of the Publicity Club on the Presentation of the Zámoly Roma Affair in the Hungarian Press[1]

The departure of the Zámoly Roma and their human rights application to the Strasbourg court may usher in a turn of the tides in the drama of the Hungarian minority so far. Not because their complaint will necessarily be heard in the European Union, nor because they can count on being admitted by any Western country easily, as Western countries are afraid, and with reason, that the example of the Zámoly group will be massively followed by those who have been their companions in distress. The exodus of the Roma is a turning point for the Roma and non-Roma who stay behind.

The desperate step of the Zámoly Roma makes it unavoidable that we face the 'Roma question'. As long as majority society treats the problems and life of a half-million minority as 'the Roma question', that very way of describing the situation is tantamount to discrimination, rejection, occasionally to racist manifestations.

Yet now a small group of Roma are saying that there is a Roma question in Hungary. If they feel there are no legal remedies to prevent unlawful ethnic discrimination, if social solidarity dries up, if prejudice and occasional racism become the model for social conduct for majority society, if Roma have to live in fear merely because they are gypsies, then the world indeed should know that there is a Roma question. Whether the Zámoly Roma are right or not, when those exposed to discrimination stand up to insist that there is a Roma question in Hungary today, then this creates a new situation for the majority society.

The exodus of the Zámoly Roma was extensively reported and discussed by the Hungarian press. Our report analyses the reports which were published between July 14 and late September. The frequency with which the printed and the electronic press attended to the topic was different.

The four major dailies with a nation-wide circulation treated the topic as of more or less the same weight and importance. Neither the average length, nor the total length of articles differ significantly. The news reports of the electronic media present a more differentiated picture: MTV1 offered the greatest number of news reports in this period, but the greatest amount of programme time was devoted to it by TV2. Radio Kossuth gave the topic more or less the same space as did MTV1. The television channel RTL attended to the Zámoly Roma question the least.

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[1] Published in the *Népszava*, 13 December 2000.

News reports	their number and	percentage
Népszabadság	37	19,5
Magyar Hírlap	35	18,4
Magyar Nemzet	40	21,1
Népszava	30	15,8
168 Óra	2	1,1
Heti Világgazdaság	5	2,6
MTV	9	4,7
TV2	6	3,2
Duna Tv	7	3,7
RTL	7	3,7
Radio Kossuth	11	5,8

THE STORY

As a first step we will make an attempt to reconstruct the happenings in the lives of the Zámoly families with the help of materials collected by the Roma Press Centre.

A storm in the autumn of 1997 had damaged the houses of the Zámoly Roma families so severely that they had become unsuitable for human habitation. The Roma turned to the local mayor's office for help. The local authority had the dangerous buildings demolished and moved the families, now without a home of their own, into the building of the local community centre as a provisional measure. The local authority withdrew the provisional permission to live in the community centre as of July 31, 1998 and announced that it was no longer prepared to undertake to provide them with accommodation. The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government tried to buy building plots for the Roma, but the ensuing sharp conflict concerning this plan could only be settled, and the plots could be bought, after an official statement by the Public Administration Office.

The Zámoly local authority extended the Roma's permission to stay in the community centre, but construction proceeded very slowly (the local authority would not issue permission for construction on the plot, which was in the centre of the village, there was a high voltage wire above one of the plots, which was finally bought and another had inland water, etc.) The National Gypsy Self-Government put up the families in a community centre in Kőbánya (a district of Budapest). In early August 1999 the Roma moved back to Zámoly to live provisionally in wooden cottages. In late August a fight broke out between three young men from Csákvár and several of the Zámoly Roma and one of the men from Csákvár suffered head injuries so serious that he died in hospital the following day. In late September one of the wooden cottages was half destroyed in a fire raised by an unidentified perpetrator. By early February 2000 the first houses were ready but they were defective owing to poor quality work: the walls were mouldy, the roof leaked, and water had not been installed. The Zámoly Roma moved again, first to Budapest, then to Csór, where they lived crammed into the basement of József Krasznai's house. In July 2000 the Roma boarded a bus, drove to France, applied for political asylum and sought help with the Human

Rights Commission of the European Union[2] for legal protection and with a claim for compensation by the Hungarian state. To understand the motivation behind their emigration it is worth quoting József Krasznai:

> "In Hungary we may starve to death, our children are squeezed into groups of mentally retarded children, we are deprived of all sorts of constitutional, social, universal human rights, and all the time we have to keep silent, and mustn't take this beyond the borders, because this is our internal affair. It just isn't true that all the rights we have here in Hungary is a right to starve to death, be destitute, be deprived of all sorts of political rights.
>
> [...] What I say to him is this: if you want to change your situation, then that's what you have to do. I am not doing it for him, I am just telling him what may happen if we do this. That's what I told the Zámoly people, that they cannot get into a worse position anywhere in the world. Wherever we go we can only end up in a better situation."

However, the story has a different interpretation as well which we will present on the basis of reports and articles published in Magyar Nemzet. In 1997 the houses owned by the Zámoly Roma became dangerous to live in because the Roma had themselves removed elements of the roof structure so that they could sell them. The local authority demolished buildings which by then had become a threat to human lives and gave the Roma shelter in the local community centre, and provided plots at reduced prices for the houses to be built by the National Gypsy Self-Government, but the Roma did not move into them. These houses were in much better condition than most of those of other Roma in the village, and the condition of the houses deteriorated because the Roma had not done anything to keep them in good condition. József Krasznai used money from the government to make the arrangements for the emigration of the Roma. Emigration is being moved by political forces, the complaint of the Zámoly group is nothing but an act of denunciation against our country designed to hinder its integration into Europe, which undermines the favourable image of Hungary prevalent in other countries.

> "The latter is discussed in greater detail by the 1999 Yearbook published by the National Security Office. Although the fact that Katalin Katz, associate of a university in Jerusalem has turned out to have financially supported the journey of the Roma has no relevance to what is being discussed there, it is by no means surprising. (*Magyar Nemzet,* September 8, a squib by Pál Molnár entitled 'Misguided Judgement').

This story is summed up by a comment made by Péter Harrach: The Roma are going abroad to bring our country into disrepute, they have put together untrue accusations, and have done less for themselves than the country has done for them.

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[2] Correctly: The European Court of Human Rights which is an institution of the Council of Europe. *(Editor's note)*

THE STORY IN THE PRESS

The fact that there are two, radically different interpretations of the story of the Zámoly Roma's emigration, indicates the extent to which the press is divided. The staff of different media organs have a – probably unfounded – unconditional trust in the media consumers' powers of memory because most of the articles omit a recapitulation of antecedent events.

Rather surprisingly, more than 50% of the reports broadcast by Radio Kossuth contained no background information at all. The television channel RTL maintained a rather superficial manner of broadcasting, giving no recapitulation of details whatsoever – not even a fragmentary one – of the events which had preceded the emigration. The same can be said about two thirds of the news broadcast by TV2. More than 50% of the news items aired by Duna Tv offered an account of previous events, and MTV1 was the most thorough broadcaster of news in the area of the electronic news reporting, with over two thirds of the news reports giving the details of the Zámoly story from its beginnings.

Background information in news reports

	percentage
no information provided	24
hardly mentioning	27
imperfect coverage	33
complete account	16

As far as the printed press is concerned, Népszabadság was the paper which devoted the least effort to reporting the background (65 % of its reports containing hardly any or no information on it). It was followed by Magyar Hírlap in this respect (46%) and Népszava (43%). Magyar Nemzet performed a feat of propaganda, repeating the account reproduced above in more than 50% of its articles to confirm the characteristic moral and political message of the articles, which we will discuss further below.

The topics most frequently mentioned in the reports include the responsibility of the government (53%) either as the main factor in the bringing about of the conflict or as an innocent sufferer. József Krasznai is mentioned (46%) and arguments for and against the success of the emigrants' plans are weighed with similar frequency (39%). Less than one tenth of the reports pay attention to the question where the Roma's funds for travel expenses may come from, and the topics of the positions of the various parties on the issue, the effect of the Roma's emigration on Hungary's accession to the European Union or the extent to which the Roma are endangering the security of the country in general.

The other topics that can be gleaned from the reports occurred in one quarter or third of the news reports.

The situation of the Roma in France is predominantly dealt with by the electronic press – with the exception of RTL – and not by the printed press. By contrast, all news channels devote more or less the same amount of attention (39%) to the question whether the Roma will finally be accorded refugee status. The paper which gave the greatest amount of attention and coverage to József Krasznai was Magyar Nemzet, discussing his role in 75%

of its articles. (Of all the articles discussing Krasznai 14% expressed antipathy for him, the same index with Magyar Nemzet being at 32%). Two thirds of the major national newspapers mention the responsibility of the government, with the exception of Magyar Nemzet, in which this index is at 45%. (Magyar Nemzet comes out as clearly tendentious on this topic in comparison: the government is portrayed as responsible for the situation in one third of all media reports whereas the same index with Magyar Nemzet is at 25%. 8% of all news items examined as opposed to 12% of the articles published in Magyar Nemzet deny the responsibility of the government and blame the Roma.)

The possibility of finding a solution to the situation, whether of a political or social nature, was discussed more often by the printed than the electronic media. Of the national dailies Magyar Nemzet pays less attention to a possible solution, but the proportion between articles expressive of a pro- or anti-Roma attitude was the same in it as in any other daily. The danger of a sudden rise in emigration to a massive level was discussed by RTL Klub far more often than by any other news agency, with 86% of its news reports mentioning the topic.

An attempt to draw up a typology of news reports inevitably seems to lead to five marked types. The first type (which accounts for 38% of all news reports) is the news.

These articles report the situation of the Roma abroad at the moment, i.e. without touching previous events or possible consequences. News reports by RTL, TV2, Radio Kossuth and Népszabadság offer the greatest number of news items belonging to this type.

The second type presents the story as another example of the Roma problem, offering detailed accounts of the situation of the Roma in Hungary, the sociological and political dimensions and the possible outcome of emigration from the Roma's point of view (17%). Most of the news reports published in TV2, Magyar Nemzet and Népszabadság present the ordeal of the Zámoly Roma in this fashion.

The third type (22%) is made up of news reports which refer back to previous events rather than merely rely on the memories of the media consumer. The best examples of this kind were Magyar Nemzet and Duna TV.

The fourth type (11%) is characterised by the same effort to go beyond a mere reproduction of facts. Besides reporting the facts of the case, several reports in Magyar Hírlap and Népszava discussed possible solutions to the problems and tried to comment on the events from the point of view of international politics.

Finally, the fifth type (12%) starts with a presentation of the background and goes on not only to a presentation of the situation at the moment but also to a discussion of consequences. This style of news reporting was most characteristic of MTV1.

THE MESSAGE

One third of the news reports conveyed no definition of the nature of the problem. 18% treated it as a conflict of a political nature, 15% as a conflict of an ethnic, and 11% as a conflict of a social nature. The proportion of approaches in legal terms (7%) and in social terms (4%) was surprisingly low and references to criminal implications were also rare (3%). Compared with these averages, MTV1 emphasised legal implications (22%) Radio Kossuth the political implications (27%). Discussion of the ethnic dimension in Magyar Hírlap and Magyar Nemzet reached 20%. The economic approach to the conflict was characteristic

of the electronic press. Duna TV and RTL showed the greatest tendency to speak of the events in terms of a social problem, while over 50% of the news reports in Radio Kossuth, TV2 and Népszabadság refrained from any evaluative comment on the conflicts.
Although the story of the Zámoly Roma has a potential for hurting various sensibilities, a surprising two thirds of the news reports submitted to analysis could be put down as matter-of-fact. One quarter of the news reports is anti-Roma, while 9% discusses the problem from the Roma point of view. The various media organs are rather divided in terms of the underlying tone of their reports: as far as the printed press is concerned, Magyar Hírlap and Népszava were the most matter-of-fact while Magyar Nemzet was the most anti-Roma of all papers. Népszabadság tried to satisfy all sorts of needs, giving free room to articles which were strongly biased in either of the two directions. There can be no doubt that the tone of reports in the electronic media was matter-of-fact, but at the same time, we never came across a programme that was biased in favour of the Roma.

Tone of the news reports
(in this order: anti-Roma, neutral, philo-Roma)

Népszabadság	32,4	54,1	13,5
Magyar Hírlap	11,4	80,0	8,6
Magyar Nemzet	47,5	45,0	7,5
Népszava	13,3	80,0	6,7
MTV	11,1	88,9	
TV2	100,0		
Duna Tv	28,6	71,4	
RTL	28,6	71,4	
Radio Kossuth	18,2	81,8	

Further proof of the matter-of-fact tone of the news reports includes the complete absence of any bad language and the almost complete avoidance of negative stereotyping concerning the Roma (4%).

As most of the reports treated the development of the Zámoly affair as the subject of what we classified as 'news', i.e. a report of events without an in-merit discussion of causes and consequences, it should not come as a surprise that 55% of them did not touch the question which occupied many participants and readers and viewers: who was responsible for the conflict? At the same time, 39% of the news reports held majority society as a whole or the local or central government responsible while 16% blamed the Roma.

Who is responsible for the conflict?

	percentage
the Roma	16
the central government	27
the local authorities	6
society	6
no opinion	55

SUMMARY

In reporting on the Zámoly affair the media found themselves in a difficult position. They had to keep their andience without departing from the set of values they espouse. Magyar Nemzet was in a somewhat simple position on this score because their articles with their characteristic anti-Roma bias and the expectations of their readership were in harmony. The other national dailies lacked this assurance of a harmony. In response to the challenge, Magyar Hírlap and Népszava took refuge in a matter-of-fact style, while Népszabadság opened the door to articles of a wide range of value orientations.

As for the electronic media, every radio station and television channel adopted a unique strategy of its own. Commercial channels predominantly avoided expressing an opinion, reporting events even without mentioning earlier events or possible consequences. They tried to remain neutral, which also meant that they did not broadcast a single programme which was biased in favour of the Roma. The public channel MTV1 devoted considerable attention to the Zámoly affair and their reports were free of bias. By contrast, Duna TV paid little attention to possible consequences or the topical question of the assignment of responsibility. In the electronic media Radio Kossuth was the one that devoted the greatest time to the Zámoly affair, but most of the programmes were mere reportings of news and over 50% of these programmes did not venture to give an opinion. In the few cases when it did, it treated the affair as predominantly a political conflict.

The news materials for our research project were provided by Observer Budapest Media Watch Ltd.

The Opinion of the Hungarian Population on Roma Migration [1]

A Research Report by András Kováts

The fact that Hungarian Roma are asking for asylum in Western Europe or Canada with reference to persecution in their own country has frequently stirred up public interest in recent months. This interest has virtually become a public preoccupation here in Hungary since the departure of the Zámoly Roma for France. Besides being profusely discussed in the press, this hot issue has occasioned a series of official statements made by the president, government officials, party politicians, Roma and non-Roma members of interest protection organisations as well as by members of the intelligentsia, and a variety of statements of partisan opinions concerning the question have become a part of Hungarian political discourse.

As part of the 'Omnibusz' data collection project conducted by TÁRKI[2] in December 2000 we asked people a few questions about the topic of Roma migration. Our aim was to find out the opinion of the adult population[3] about the statements which had frequently been voiced as part of every-day social and political discourse about Roma migration.[4]

The figures are given in the *Appendix* (they are summarised in *Chart A1*).

The first statement which has often been heard recently is that "the Western countries should adopt the Roma asylum-seekers" (*Chart A2*). Almost 50% of the population reject this position partly or completely. Slightly over one quarter of the population have a 'yes and no' attitude to the question, while the remaining one quarter agree partly or completely.

We examined the distribution of opinions also with a view to finding significant links between various social groups and relevant differences in the distribution of opinions.[5] Among people living in villages, people with low educational qualifications and lower incomes the number of those who think Western countries should admit the Roma applicants was above the average. Among people living in county centres, people with secondary school levels and higher incomes acceptance of this opinion was below the average.

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[1] The report was made as part of a research project done for the Prime Minister's Office.

[2] Short for 'Társadalomkutató Intézet', i.e. Institute for Social Research.

[3] The sample included persons representing the Hungarian population at and above 18 yeas of age arranged according to age, sex, type of place of residence, and educational qualifications.

[4] Interviewees were allowed to rank their approval of the statements according to a five-grade scale, i.e. completely agree, partly agree, agree and not agree, disagree rather than agree and disagree completely.

[5] In the specific dimensions we examined whether there were any significant changes in the proportion of those who partly (rather) or completely agree with the above statement.

An opinion often voiced in debates about Roma migration is that "it would be a good solution to the problems of the Hungarian gypsies if Western countries allowed them to settle down as refugees" (*Chart A3*). The opinion of the population about this statement is more evenly distributed. Somewhat less than one quarter agree and do not agree, while the rest are divided more or less equally between agreement and rejection.

A greater than average proportion of those living in villages, those with low incomes, the elderly, those regarding themselves as belonging to the working or lower classes, and those who find their financial situation bad or very bad, think the problem of Hungarian gypsies were solved if the gypsies left Hungary to live in another country.[6] The proportion of those who share this opinion was below the average among inhabitants of the capital, those with relatively high incomes, those in their thirties, those classifying themselves as lower middle class, and those who are satisfied with their financial situation.

More than 50% of the population agreed completely, 25% partly, with the statement that "most of the Roma applying for refugee status abroad have not been persecuted in Hungary" (*Chart A4*). Less than one tenth of those answering were of a partly or completely different opinion.

A greater than average proportion of the elderly, those with poor education and those with extreme opinions on the activity of the government think the gypsies have not been persecuted in Hungary.[7] The number of those agreeing with the statement was well below the average among people below 30 years of age.

Surveying the history of Roma migration in the past few years we may come to the conclusion that "the gypsies in Hungary are in such a bad situation that they are driven to ask for refugee status in Western states" (*Chart A5*). The majority of the Hungarian population do not share this view: more than 50% of those answering do not agree with it at all and a further 25% are disposed to reject rather than accept it. Less than a tenth of them subscribe to this view.

It is only in terms of age that the proportion of those dissenting from the above view displays any significant difference: less than the average proportion of young people (those below 30) are convinced that the situation of the gypsies in Hungary does not sufficiently justify taking recourse to applying for refugee status elsewhere.[8]

The charge has often been made against the Roma who left for France in July that "the Zámoly Roma went to Strasbourg and asked for asylum with the purpose of bringing the country into disrepute" (*Chart A6*). Almost two thirds of the population agree with this statement. The remaining one third are divided approximately fifty-fifty between agreement and disagreement, on the one hand, and between partial or complete rejection.

This opinion enjoys greater than average acceptance among those who live in villages,[9] those with low education, the elderly and those who hold extreme views on the activity of

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[6] As with the previous questions, we were now examining in the specific dimensions whether there were any significant changes in the proportions of those who agree with the above statement partly or completely.

[7] In this case we were examining in the specific dimensions the proportion of those who agreed with the statement completely.

[8] We were now examining in the specific dimensions whether there were any significant changes in the proportion of those who completely reject the above statement.

[9] Here again we were examining the proportion of those agreeing with the statement completely, in the specific dimensions.

the government. A smaller than average proportion of the residents of the capital, those with higher education degrees and those below 30 agree with it completely.

A recurrent theme in the debates surrounding refugee migration is captured in the question whether the applicants are really driven to leave their source country by the persecution and atrocities to which they have been exposed or are merely trying to acquire an entitlement to reside in an economically more developed country in the hope of a better living, i.e. whether they are really economic migrants. The question we asked about the Hungarian Roma concerned their reasons for applying for refugee status in a Western country. A mere 3% of the Hungarian population think the Roma who asked for refugee status in the West had left their country because of the persecution and discrimination they had suffered there. An overwhelming majority (85%) of those answering are of the opinion that the Roma are going to the West and applying for refugee status in the hope of a better living. 7% think that the two causes are combined, and 5% think there is something else hidden in the background.

APPENDIX

Chart A1

Opinion of the Hungarian population about the five statements made about Roma migration; percentage

Statement	Agree completely	Agree rather than not	Agree and do not agree	Disagree rather than agree	Do not agree at all	Total
Western countries should admit gypsies who ask for asylum	11,5	13,6	26,4	22,9	25,6	100 (N = 1365)
It would be a good solution to the problems of Hungarian gypsies if Western countries accepted them as refugees	16,7	20,3	23,9	19,6	19,5	100 (N = 1352)
Most of the gypsies who ask for refugee status abroad have not been persecuted in Hungary	56,9	24,5	9,8	5,7	3,1	100 (N = 1346)
The situation of gypsies in Hungary is so bad that they are driven to ask for refugee status in Western countries	2,1	4,8	10,5	25,3	57,3	100 (N = 1421)
The Zámoly Roma left for Strasbourg and asked for asylum with the purpose of bringing Hungary into disrepute	41,2	22,7	18,6	10,6	6,8	100 (N = 1306)

Chart A2

"Western countries should admit gypsies who ask for refugee status"
Distribution of the opinion of the population; percentage

Feature	Agree completely or partly	Different opinion	Total
Type of place			
Village	30,9	69,1	100 (N = 489)
Town/city	22,4	77,6	100 (N = 303)
County centre	20,5	79,5	100 (N = 314)
Capital	23,0	77,0	100 (N = 259)
Education			
Less than 8 years at primary school	37,4	62,6	100 (N = 104)
8 years at primary school	29,1	70,9	100 (N = 349)
Vocational secondary school	24,6	75,4	100 (N = 414)
Grammar school levels	19,6	80,4	100 (N = 335)
Higher education degree	21,7	78,3	100 (N = 163)
Income			
The lowest one-fifth	33,8	66,2	100 (N = 218)
The second	28,8	71,2	100 (N = 243)
The third	24,6	75,4	100 (N = 233)
The fourth	23,9	76,1	100 (N = 215)
The top one-fifth	18,6	81,4	100 (N = 231)
Population total	*25,1*	*74,9*	*100 (N = 1365)*

Chart A3

"It would be a good solution to the problems of Hungarian gypsies if they were accepted as refugees by Western states"
Distribution of the opinion of the population; percentage

Feature	Agree completely or partly	Different opinion	Total
Type of place			
Village	43,5	56,5	100 (*N* = 478)
Town/city	36,0	64,0	100 (*N* = 301)
County centre	33,6	66,4	100 (*N* = 309)
Capital	30,4	69,6	100 (*N* = 264)
Age group			
18–29	32,7	67,3	100 (*N* = 285)
30–39	28,7	71,3	100 (*N* = 267)
40–49	36,5	63,5	100 (*N* = 257)
50–59	41,9	58,1	100 (*N* = 227)
60–X	44,3	55,7	100 (*N* = 311)
Income			
The lowest one-fifth	42,4	57,6	100 (*N* = 208)
The second	39,3	60,7	100 (*N* = 240)
The third	39,9	60,1	100 (*N* = 224)
The fourth	39,2	60,8	100 (*N* = 217)
The top one-fifth	28,7	71,3	100 (*N* = 233)
Assignment to social class			
Low	41,7	58,3	100 (*N* = 106)
Working class	42,4	57,6	100 (*N* = 527)
Lower middle class	29,4	70,6	100 (*N* = 301)
Middle class	32,9	67,1	100 (*N* = 377)
Upper middle class	47,8*	52,2*	100 (*N* = 23)
Upper	71,9*	28,1*	100 (*N* = 4)
Financial situation			
Very bad	45,9	54,1	100 (*N* = 136)
Bad	41,5	58,5	100 (*N* = 320)
Mediocre	35,1	64,9	100 (*N* = 797)
Good	25,1	74,9	100 (*N* = 94)
Very good	23,8*	76,2*	100 (*N* = 4)
Population total	*37,0*	*63,0*	*100 (N = 1351)*

* Insignificant because of the small number of items.

Chart A4

"Most of the gypsies asking for refugee status abroad have not been persecuted in Hungary"
Distribution of the opinion of the population; percentage

Feature	Agree completely or partly	Different opinion	Total
Age group			
18–29	45,4	54,6	100 (*N* = 271)
30–39	56,1	43,9	100 (*N* = 265)
40–49	56,5	43,5	100 (*N* = 263)
50–59	62,4	37,6	100 (*N* = 229)
60–X	63,8	36,2	100 (*N* = 315)
Education			
Less than 8 years at primary school	64,5	35,5	100 (*N* = 99)
8 years at primary school	59,4	40,6	100 (*N* = 343)
Vocational secondary school	55,6	44,4	100 (*N* = 409)
Grammar school levels	53,4	46,6	100 (*N* = 332)
Higher education degree	57,6	42,4	100 (*N* = 161)
Opinion about the government			
Only negative	68,6	31,4	100 (*N* = 241)
Negative rather than positive	53,0	47,0	100 (*N* = 515)
Positive rather than negative	54,0	46,0	100 (*N* = 416)
Only positive	61,6	38,4	100 (*N* = 59)
No idea	57,8	42,2	100 (*N* = 110)
Population total	*56,9*	*43,1*	*100 (N = 1346)*

Chart A5

"The situation of gypsies in Hungary is so bad that they are driven to ask for refugee status in Western states"
Distribution of the opinion of the population; percentage

Feature	Agree completely or partly	Different opinion	Total
Age group			
18–29	47,4	52,6	100 (*N* = 300)
30–39	62,0	38,0	100 (*N* = 286)
40–49	57,8	42,2	100 (*N* = 268)
50–59	60,1	39,9	100 (*N* = 238)
60–X	59,7	40,3	100 (*N* = 326)
Opinion about the government			
Only negative	66,2	33,8	100 (*N* = 256)
Negative rather than positive	55,9	44,1	100 (*N* = 545)
Positive rather than negative	53,7	46,3	100 (*N* = 433)
Only positive	59,8	40,2	100 (*N* = 62)
No idea	55,3	44,7	100 (*N* = 120)
Population total	*57,3*	*42,7*	*100 (N = 1421)*

Chart A6

"The Zámoly Roma left for Strasbourg and asked for refugee status with the purpose of bringing the country into disrepute." Distribution of the opinion of the population; percentage

Feature	Agree completely or partly	Different opinion	Total
Type of place			
Village	48,1	51,9	100 (*N* = 466)
Town/city	36,4	63,6	100 (*N* = 285)
County centre	40,9	59,1	100 (*N* = 298)
Capital	34,2	65,8	100 (*N* = 257)
Education			
Less than 8 years at primary school	45,4	54,6	100 (*N* = 98)
8 years at primary school	44,4	55,6	100 (*N* = 327)
Vocational secondary school	46,4	53,6	100 (*N* = 403)
Grammar school levels	36,1	63,9	100 (*N* = 321)
Higher education degree	29,0	71,0	100 (*N* = 156)
Age group			
18–29	29,3	70,7	100 (*N* = 275)
30–39	38,5	61,5	100 (*N* = 252)
40–49	39,5	60,5	100 (*N* = 248)
50–59	49,5	50,5	100 (*N* = 229)
60–X	49,3	50,7	100 (*N* = 299)
Opinion about the government			
Only negative	48,7	51,3	100 (*N* = 241)
Negative rather than positive	37,8	62,2	100 (*N* = 500)
Positive rather than negative	36,5	63,5	100 (*N* = 400)
Only positive	53,6	46,4	100 (*N* = 57)
No idea	50,3	49,7	100 (*N* = 104)
Population total	*41,2*	*58,8*	*100 (N = 1306)*

APPENDIX

Parliamentary Speeches related to Roma Migration

Compiled by András Kováts

This compilation comprises all the speeches made in Parliament from 1 September 2000 to 31 May 2001.[1] Some speeches dealt exclusively with Roma migration – and within that mainly with the refugee claim submitted by the Roma of Zámoly in France – while in another part the question appears as a side-issue in an allusion or two. In the latter case, only the part of the speech dealing with the issue in question is given here rather than the full text of the address. Omissions are indicated with an ellipsis in square brackets [...]. The texts are unedited and thus follow the characteristics of spoken language.

In the period surveyed a total of 44 speeches were made in connection with Roma migration. Mostly it was members of the government who dealt with the question (13 speeches), which is only natural as the members of the various parties queried government members. Of the individual parties, members of SZDSZ made eleven, of Fidesz (Fidesz–Hungarian Civic Party) six, of MIÉP five, of MDF three, of FKGP two speeches, and of MSZP one address[2]; two speeches were made by independent MPs. On one occasion the ombudsman of minority-affairs also rose to speak.[3]

The source of this collection is the website *Országgyűlési Napló* (www.parlament.hu/naplo), searched for the keywords ZÁMOLY, CANADA, REFUGEE, STRASBOURG, GYPSY and ROMA.

The text was searched for the following combinations of keywords (root words and truncated forms):

- CANADA and REFUGEE,
- STRASBOURG and ROMA or GYPSY,
- CANADA and ROMA or GYPSY,
- REFUGEE and ROMA or GYPSY.
- REFUGEE and STRASBOURG.

Every occurrence of the word ZÁMOLY was examined. Of the texts thus collected, those which contained the keywords but the speech was unrelated to Roma migration (as for example Hungarian REFUGEE s in CANADA after '56 or the report of the committee examining the situation of REFUGEES and the ROMA) have been omitted. However, the con-

[1] Although the enquiry included all three parliamentary periods, not a single speech was devoted to the issue before September of 2000.

[2] SZDSZ: Alliance of Free Democrats; Fidesz: Alliance of Young Democrats; MIÉP: Party of Hungarian Truth and Life; MDF: Hungarian Democratic Forum; MSZP: Hungarian Socialist Party. *(The translator.)*

[3] For the sake of a comprehensive view, the party membership of each speaker is given at the back of this collection (p. 169).

text of each address related to Roma migration was examined, thus further speeches which may not contain any of the keywords but are related to Roma migration have been included (these tend to be questions, explanations and supplements connected to longer speeches).

4 SEPTEMBER 2000.

GÁBOR IVÁNYI (SZDSZ, ante-agenda speech): Mr Speaker, Honourable House! Eleven centuries ago an easily identifiable ethnic group rose and set off from its domicile in Asia, stirring up fear and irritation in the Europe of the day. They did that for reasons other than being a congenitally adventurous people who preferred the uncertain bread of exile, the life lived by foxes and the birds of the skies, to the safe hearth of a home protected by walls. They concluded that those with whom they had lived together were stronger than they were, people against whom they were unable to enforce their own rightful and fundamental interests; staying, they would have jeopardised the future of their children and would have had their tents set on fire and their cattle slaughtered or dispersed, their doubtful peace preserved as servants at best. Instead, they chose to uphold their dignity, to take their fate in their own hand – so they set out for the West. These people called themselves the Magyar.

Celebrations of that historical event are an unceasing activity in this country. The right hand of the king who founded the realm is taken on a 'visit' to the parliament, while the Roma of Zámoly, and not only of Záhony, are obliged to leave this land *(Noises and murmuring from the ranks of Fidesz – Ernő Rozgonyi: What's the connection?)*, this land, which they are just as much the children of as any one of us here, or any ethnic group constituting this nation, from the greatest to the smallest.

The era of roaming belongs to the past, and nobody wishes to live as a foreign-speaking refugee in an alien land. Our Roma fellow-citizens were not motivated by their adventurous spirit either but driven away by desperation. For what else can be done if one belongs to an ethnic community two thirds of which, although of working age, are unemployed? And no one should tell me that these people have no intention to work, that they indend to live better on unemployment benefit than on decent wages.

What can you do if you belong to an ethnic minority with ninety percent of its school-age children are directed, as they are in a particular county, to auxiliary schools for the disabled, a minority whose members are segregated at secondary-school valedictory parades, dining halls or gymnasia; whose members alone could be hunted down by armed men in recent years; and who were forcefully evicted from their miserable abodes without mercy or pity, and not only in Zugló or Király Street. But it is not pity that I wish to claim for them, but intend to give voice to my consternation as a Hungarian and my shame as a Member of Parliament felt over the fact that the government of Canada, obviously uninterested in admitting refugees of Roma or other origin from Hungary or Eastern Europe to its country, found, before the enquiries have been closed, that at least 250 Roma families have well-founded claims to refugee status. That anyone, while Hungary is celebrating the 1001st year of its foundation, should be obliged to flee, is a shame, Honourable Members!

The governments after the change of political system have all been guilty and so is everybody who has failed to do anything against this situation, who kept quiet or formed a living

chain from their irresponsible, stupid and wicked words and deeds preventing the Roma, a people kept waiting since times preceding the invention of printing to become established and worthy members of this nation, a people waiting, after being worn out working in ill-paid jobs in the grandiose government projects of the past thirty years and then becoming the first to become unemployed, to be accepted and regular inhabitants of this country.

Honourable Members! Shameful or not, an anti-discrimination law must be passed, real assistance must be given in place of auxiliary schools so that Roma children can have a decent education, too, and protected jobs, and not only in the area of communal work, must also be granted.

We're now in the twelfth hour to avoid a national disaster resulting from what is going on about the issue in this country. I expect that my fellow-members of a responsible mentality will do something here, in parliament, and do it efficiently and accountably, in order that the situation changes.

Thank you for your attention *(Applause in the ranks of MSZP and SZDSZ.)*

SPEAKER: Under-secretary Csaba Hende wishes to answer on behalf of the government.

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Hungary is a democracy with a solid institutional background, which guarantees the rule of law, human rights, and that minority rights are honoured and protected. No minority, not of the Roma's either, is allowed to suffer persecution. The Minority Law of 1993, the establishment, begun in 1994, of a system of minority self-government based on that law, the parliamentary commissioner of minority rights, the minority ombudsman in other words, the Parliament of Hungary, and the appropriate governmental organisations, together with non-governmental organisations, comprise the elements, one organically built upon the other, of a system of minority protection which is the object internationally of unique and undivided esteem. (*Sporadic applause from the ranks of government seats.*)

Any individual or group belonging to any minority feeling its rights to be violated can freely avail itself of a wide range of legal remedies. Besides the administrative and police authorities, the public prosecutors' offices, the law courts, the permanent parliamentary committee of minority affairs, the minority ombudsman, and the Constitutional Court, a whole array of non-governmental civil rights agencies supported by the government have started their activities in the past few decades. All these domestic fora are now available, helping, in alliance with a diverse free press, those who may have been transgressed against to assert their rights. That is why I do not find it reasonable, even though I do not question its legality, that the Roma families of Zámoly have turned with their complaints – containing numerous unfounded statements of fact –, instead of to domestic fora, to the European Court of Human Rights based in Strasbourg.

The situation of the Gypsy community is indeed an all-European social problem. The efforts made in this respect by the Republic of Hungary have always been appreciated by the international community. The Honourable Member will certainly allow me to illustrate all that by reading out a letter received recently. Written by the Secretary General of the UN, the letter is addressed to Dr. Ibolya Dávid, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Hungary. Here are the relevant passages of the letter:

"Dear Minister: Having returned to New York, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome with which the delegation I headed was received during my visit to Budapest. I particularly appreciate the opportunity to have met you and three representatives of the Roma community of Hungary. With its efforts aimed at dealing with minority-related problems and at the highest levels facilitating dialogue among minority representatives, the government of Hungary set an example for other European and non-European nations to follow. The words of Mr Farkas [meaning Flórián Farkas, Chairman of the National Gypsy Self-Government]; so the following is said by Mr Kofi Annan: fully convinced me that the efforts of your government have inspired confidence in the Roma community.

You have my support in continuing your pioneering work in co-operation with the minority communities of your country. Allow me to repeat my thanks for your and your fellow-government-members' willingness to discuss issues concerning the Roma with me as openly as you did during my very profitable stay in Budapest," date, signature as Kofi Annan, General Secretary of the UN. *(Applause from the ranks of the government and MIÉP representatives.)*

Honourable Member! The government is now implementing and financing a medium-range programme. Under this programme, and identified in the budget for the year 2000, resources set aside for Roma-related purposes amount to 7.2 thousand million forints. Of these amounts, mention should be made – as random examples for I am indeed pressed for time – a sum of 1.7 thousand million earmarked for Roma educational programmes, another 100 million forints to be spent on stipends payable to gypsy students suffering from poverty, 529.5 million forints to finance training meant to help the long-term Roma unemployed catch up, 1.5415 thousand million for the involvement of the Roma in public works programmes, but there is a sum of 85.5 for welfare allotments to be cultivated by the Roma, an amount of 200 million for the budget of the Gandhi Public Endowment, and so on. Another 431 million forints are being used to support the work of Roma minority self-governments. Beyond that sum, the Roma of Hungary are of course entitled, as citizens of the land, to thousand millions' worth of welfare and social benefits.

But Hungary has nothing else to offer to its Roma, in the short, the middle or the long run *(the Speaker indicates that speaking time is running out by tapping the bell)*, than education and work. We are convinced that there is no other way to their ascendancy or social integration.

Thank you very much. *(Applause in the ranks of government and MIÉP representatives.)*

7 NOVEMBER 2000

DR. LÁSZLÓ VARGA (FIDESZ, ante-agenda speech): [...] The largest opposition party, the Hungarian Socialist Party [...], was not born in a democratic system, is not the child of a democratic system, but the result of the co-operation between the despotic foreign occupiers and the coarse Hungarian Communist Party, the antidemocratic child of the political marriage between those two. *(Uproar from the ranks of the MSZP).* It is from that antidemocratic behaviour and inherited features that the extreme reactions derive with which the Hungarian Socialist Party responds to the moves taken by the government to build the country's future,

with which it tries to render those measures ineffective, to raise obstacles in the way of the government's social measures and tarnish its international reputation.

An appalling example of the latter is what a speaker of the Hungarian Socialist Party said when he declared, giving his opinion on a refugee-related matter, that the Roma of Zámoly asserted their inalienable right when making their request in Strasbourg, implying that the refugee claim was legitimate. Besides revealing deep ignorance, that assertion also undermined our country's prestige, as it takes no more than half an hour studying refugee law to be aware of the fact that only those will be granted refugee status who can prove that by returning to their country they will expose themselves to political persecution. In Hungary, there is no political persecution, there are no political prisoners, there are no political trials, not even against those who betrayed their country during the revolution in the United Nations, or filled responsible positions or worked as officials in organisations where people were tortured or beaten to death. [...]

KISS ANDOR (MIÉP, question to the foreign minister:) [...] those who respected the election results of a country and did not question them, only smiled at these efforts.[4] Then the UN sent out on a fact-finding mission its so-called wise men, who found that the principles of democracy had not been violated and that human rights were also honoured. And that despite the fact that these wise men would have beheld the mote in their brother's eye without considering a fathom-wide beam in their own. Let me mention as an example the fact that if a Slovak Roma or two emigrate to their country, they will immediately threaten to introduce the compulsory visa system. Where is their tolerance then? [...]

14 FEBRUARY 2001

TIBOR ERKEL (MIÉP, speech): [...] Let me finally say something about the provision in the motion[5] that "Parents, grandparents or guardians are not entitled to maternity leave payment for the period of a continuous stay abroad exceeding three months." I agree with the provision, but I feel something is still missing.

How is it possible that the Roma of Zámoly, having left the country to avoid being possibly held responsible for a murder which had in fact occurred, and reviled our country every possible forum, received fat hundreds of thousands [of forints] as family aid as long as half a year after leaving the country. If maternity leave payment is terminated after three months' stay abroad – a measure I emphatically agree with – then why should other allowances remain payable after stays abroad for twice as long? The ministry in charge is hereby alerted to this inequitable situation, and I call for its rectification, for example via the amendment of the law. [...]

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[4] At the fact that politicians and public figures petitioned the Hungarian government to join the governments implementing sanctions against Austria after the Freedom Party of that country was included in Austria's government.

[5] The amendment of Act LXXXIV of 1998 on assisting families.

5 MARCH 2001

DR. GÁBOR FODOR (SZDSZ, ante-agenda speech): Mr Speaker, Honourable Members! I demanded the floor for an ante-agenda speech to address a very serious question. What is at issue *(András Gyürk: Five percent![6])* is what our prestige depends on in the world; whether we can honour the fundamental principles upon which the states of the free and civilised world are built. What is at issue, Honourable Members, is whether the government, the parliament and politicians do everything to ensure that the Roma of Hungary can feel at home in Hungary. *(Murmur from the benches of Fidesz. – Cries of "That hurts!")*

I have read appalling news in the press in recent days. An English magazine reports that the Russian secret service is supposedly behind the fact that the Roma of Záhony had escaped to France and claimed refugee status in Strasbourg. *(Interjection from the benches of Fidesz: Mossad!)* Mr Ervin Demeter, Minister in Charge of the Secret Services, had been in London, according to the television show *A Hét* [The Week], a week before the magazine issue was published. The programme *A Hét* claimed that the English had been tipped off from Budapest. *(Zoltán Vancsik: Of course!)* We do not know the truth of the matter. The Alliance of Free Democrats has moved that an ad hoc session of the National Security Committee be called so that we can see clearly in the matter. But it is now clear that some heavy-handed publicity campaign is being mounted against the Roma of Hungary. *(Protestation from the ranks of Fidesz – Interjections: That hurts! – András Gyürki: For shame!)* And no honourable political force can have a share in that publicity campaign. *(Continuous noise from the government benches.)*

Honourable Members! Even those agitated and shouting now are aware that we have seen this kind of thing before. We have seen it, as in the Romania of Funar and Tudor, the Slovakia of Mečiar, the Yugoslavia of Milošević *(great noise from the benches of Fidesz)*, the argument was often made that ethnic Hungarians were used by various secret services for the defamation of those countries abroad. The situation is not unfamiliar, so we know very well what we are dealing with. We also know, Honourable Members, that it is a mistake to believe that this can distract attention from the tragic plight of the Roma of Hungary. Because the Gypsies of this country live under dreadful circumstances, are discriminated against and struggling against disadvantages.

It is not only us who say so, Honourable Members! It is also said by a report made by the State Department of the United States, a report concluding that the Gypsies of Hungary are grievously discriminated against in education, housing, public institutions, and are regularly targeted by police action. The same is said by the report of he ECRI, that is the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The same is said by Human Right's Watch, an international human rights organisation. The same is said by an OSCE-report issued on the position of European Gypsies last year, and the same conclusion is borne out by the refugee decisions passed in Canada, in more than ten percent of the cases involving Gypsies from Hungary claiming refugee status the claim of discrimination is recognised and the status granted. *(Dr. Dénes Kosztolányi: Does Szadesz[7] publish in so many places?!)*

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[6] The threshold for getting into the parliament: a political party should get at least 5% of the votes at the parliamentary elections. Being a small party, SZDSZ was that time threatened with dropping from the parliament.

[7] Nickname for SZDSZ. (*The translator.*)

Honourable Members! It is then said abroad that there in fact is discrimination, and that something is wrong with Hungary. What, then, does the government do, and what is being said in Hungary? A few days ago the Roma Civil Rights Foundation issued a report about pogroms. Pogroms at Nádasladány, at Gérce and then at Bag were written about. At Bag, as they described, action of an appalling nature was taken by the police against the Gypsy population there. The article says, for example, that during the raid, one policeman turned to a Roma person, and said, "repeat after me, stinking Gypsy, ...," which was followed by something I would not like to repeat, because it will not bear quoting before the Honourable House. *(Noise from the ranks of Fidesz – Interjections: Go ahead, say it.)* "I'm scum and so is my mother." The Gypsy man said he wouldn't, so he was beaten up.

And what does the government do? It keeps quiet, Honourable Members! *(Dr. Dénes Kosztolányi: We haven't heard that lie before!)* The President of the Republic keeps quiet, the minister of education keeps quiet. *(Continuous noise from Fidesz benches.)* And yet we know it full well that silence will not solve anything. I think the one who is silent is scared, afraid to face the facts, afraid to face reality. As we know, Honourable Members, he who remains silent amongst sinners conspires with them.

I thank you for your attention. *(Applause from the ranks of SZDSZ and MSZP – András Gyürk: Four point five percent! – Gábor Horn: Humility, boys!)*

SPEAKER: Dr. Csaba Hende Under-secretary wishes to answer. [...]

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Thank you for the leave to speak. Mr Speaker, Honourable House! Honourable Member, I will not react to what you have said in connection with the security-related implications; on the one hand, I lack competence, on the other, you have yourself concluded that we do not know what the truth of the matter is. You have moved that a session of the National Security Committee be called. Let us hope it'll help us see more clearly.

However, the question whether the government does everything to make the Roma feel that Hungary is their homeland, would be very hard to answer in the affirmative with a clear conscience. That is because it is impossible, in general, to do everything. One can strive to do so, to achieve absolute perfection and comprehensiveness, but the imperfection inherent in human nature tends to prevent us from achieving that noble goal.

I agree with you that the Gypsy population of Hungary is in a grave situation. One would have to be blind not to see that. One would have to be blind to fail to recognise that what is at issue is the fate of the entire nation, for unless the problem of the Gypsy population is solved and their social integration achieved, there will be no modern Hungary in the 21st century and there will be no European integration either.

But if you rephrase the question, and ask whether this government exerts itself to solve all these problems, then I can say yes wholeheartedly and with a clear conscience.

This government continues with the mid-term package of measures whose implementation, after its passing into law in 1997, was begun by the previous government, except we are doing so with a little more dynamism, with a little more efficiency and with a little more money expended. If I may remind you as a distinguished former member of the previous government, the budget for the fiscal year 1997–98 earmarked 3 thousand million forints as Roma money; the equivalent sum in last years' budget was 7.2 thousand million.

Naturally, that much is insufficient, too, but isn't it, after all, more than twice the amount set aside for the purpose at the end of its mandate, Honourable Member? *(Zoltán Vancsik: Both are too little! – Sporadic applause from the benches of Fidesz and of MIÉP).*

I would like to say, and it may not be entirely coincidental that this is the example that springs to mind, as you were at the head of the ministry of education in the previous government, that the only way to the permanent advancement of the Gypsy population, and I'm sure we'll agree on this, leads through education, through the system of public education, and to that access and opportunities have to be provided for Roma children.

Honourable Member! In the academic year 1996-97, a total of 785 young Roma received government grants to participate in primary, secondary and higher education. In the academic year 1998–99, this figure rose to 1468 persons. In the academic year '99–2000, the number of these young men and women was 2881. In this year the number of Roma recipients of government grants is at 7580. *(Applause from the ranks of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)* So if you put the question to me of what evidence I can produce of our commitment to solving this problem, then I think that these statistics, which are not disputed by anyone because they cannot be disputed, as facts and figures will not go away, Honourable Member, these figures are what I have to offer.

And what I can tell you by the way is that on this very day it has been announced by the Ministry of Health that in the critical situation that characterises the health of our Gypsy population, the ministry is launching a new and exceptionally innovative programme, supported by the European Union, too, with a budget of 2 thousand million forints. An agreement providing for a public works programme budgeted at 3 thousand million forints was signed last week between the Ministry of Social and Family Affairs and the Ministry of the Economy. The Ministry of Education and the bureau of minority affairs will expend, in two separate Phare-programmes, a sum, including European resources, of more than 3 thousand million forints to improve the lot of the Roma in the forthcoming period.

Honourable Member, I have answered your insinuations in the language of facts and figures. Thank you very much. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

9 MARCH 2001.

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, ante-agenda speech): Thank you for the leave to speak. Honourable House! Today it is 9 March. A month ago, on 9 February, there was a police raid at the Gypsy colony of the village Bag. I know two accounts of the incident. One is the reports issued by the Roma Press Centre and the Roma Civil Rights Foundations published in *Élet és Irodalom* [the weekly Life and Literature] and *Népszabadság* [the daily People's Liberty] respectively. The other version is that of the non-Gypsy population of Bag, who informed me of their view of the incident in a letter.

The two accounts were motivated by contrary emotions, passions and prejudices but, surprisingly, there are no essential differences between their contents. The account given by the Roma activists acknowledges that there are burglars and thieves living in the colony, and the weekend cottage owners also recognise that the police used violence against innocent people when they mounted an assault on the wailing Roma during a night vigil.

Indeed, can you, Honourable Members, imagine that the police should disturb a ritual involving members of a non-Roma, say Catholic, community on the assumption that there might be criminals among the mourners?! I'm sure you can't imagine that. What the police expressed by attacking the Roma during a mourning ritual, is that they do not regard the Roma as human beings.

And that aspect of the incident, disputed by none, is the most important consideration. The police and other local authorities around the country allow themselves to use unlawful methods in their dealings with the Roma, supported by public sentiment prevailing locally. That is what happened at Zámoly, at Sátoraljaújhely, in Rádió Street, Székesfehérvár, and now at Bag; and in the meantime the gap separating a large part of the Roma from the non-Roma population in terms of living standards, ways of life, and cultural backgrounds has, rather than closed, opened ever wider in the past ten or twelve years due, in part, to the massive unemployment that has replaced full employment, the precarious existence, deteriorating housing conditions, and the subsistence-related crime that has appeared in the wake of all that. And that's what their environment and the authorities react to with humiliation and violence.

We are aware that there is no short-term solution to the problem. I cannot address the issue of a long-term solution in a five-minute speech. What is undeniable, however, is that many of our fellow citizens of Roma ethnicity feel persecuted in their own country. If some of them should choose emigration as a way out, then they are the last to be held accountable, and the very last person who has the right to do so in a speech he gave at the Vigadó is the Prime Minister. And what is perhaps the most important thing is that nobody should seriously look for some secret-service intrigue if the self-confident leaders of the Roma community speak, at home as abroad, about living under a threat in Hungary.

It is for decades that we lived under circumstances in which anything resented by those in power was attributed to the machinations of the enemy's secret services. Under the Fidesz government, the Fidesz press – because *Magyar Nemzet* [the daily Hungarian Nation] is a paper that belongs to Fidesz –, the Fidesz TV-channel – because the public television, and especially the show *A Hét*, belongs to Fidesz – we have lived to see that if there is a problem, it is once again ascribed to enemy secret services, except that rather than the American, it is now the Russian secret service that serves as a scapegoat. That is how far we have come eleven years after the change of political system and two and a half years after the inauguration of the Fidesz government. I thank you for your attention.

SPEAKER: Under-secretary Csaba Hende wishes to answer on behalf of the government. Under-secretary, the floor is yours.

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Honourable House, Mr Speaker! Honourable Member! Once again, I will have to begin the same way as I did before the agenda last Tuesday. Then it was Honourable Member Gábor Fodor who had risen to speak. As I said then, I will say now, too, that a hearing is in process in the national security committee enquiring into the security-service issue you mentioned. The matter lies beyond my competence, I'm no expert of the matter, so I will not give opinion on the matter.

I will, however, respond to your assertion that the Roma of Záhony was harassed by the police. *(Tamás Bauer: I didn't say that.)* Oh, yes, you did, Honourable Member. You

listed Zámoly, too, as my notes tell me. I am unaware of anything of the sort, but I do know about a consultation held by the officials of the Fejér County Police Headquarters and attended by representatives of the ombudsman's office, the bureau of minority affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and the public endowments for the Roma. Here the officials of the police pledged to provide round-the-clock police surveillance in the person of the district constable to protect those Roma who felt threatened. The measure has been implemented since then.

Further, the police headquarters also promised to provide increased protection, in the form of patrolling, to heighten a sense of security if the members of the Roma community were willing to move into their Zámoly houses built with government resources.

Further, the representative of the police headquarters also promised, in case all that failed to reassure the members of the Roma community, to establish a telephone hotline through which the Roma of Zámoly could contact the officials of the headquarters in charge of the matter. Despite all that, several members of the Roma community emigrated claiming to be threatened and persecuted and asserting that the Hungarian authorities were unable to guarantee their security.

As you have said yourself, presumably on such grounds, they were granted refugee status by the French authorities in recent days.

Without commenting on or judging the steps taken by the French authorities – France is a sovereign state, which obviously decides on cases in its jurisdiction according to its laws and at its own discretion – I would, however, like to let it be known that, in a communiqué issued by MTI [the Hungarian News Agency] after the departure abroad of the Roma of Záhony, on 14 August 2000, I proffered, on behalf of the government and besides other government promises and pledges to guarantee their livelihood and accommodation, the aforementioned guarantees of security, that is our willingness to provide, in the event of their return to Hungary, for these circumstances, such as constant police surveillance, increased patrolling and a telephone hotline to the police authorities.

It is remarkable that several members of the group have returned to Hungary after their departure to Strasbourg on more than one occasion to collect the welfare benefits legally payable to them, and thus have been at Zámoly, where they are allegedly threatened by physical danger, and gone to the municipality to claim those allowances.

It is also noteworthy that Melinda Lakatos, who has returned with her three children from Strasbourg and has been provided, or will be provided, with accommodation and a livelihood – and I say that on the basis of an exchange I had earlier today with the spokesperson of the Fejér County police –, has not only been spared any kind of harassment, but has not been subjected to a single unpleasant remark from the majority population of Hungarians living in the village. Under these circumstances, Honourable Member, the persecution, threat and danger you cited, appear to me not only unfounded but downright ridiculous. Thank you very much.

26 MARCH 2001

DR. MIKLÓS CSAPODY (MDF, ante-agenda speech): Mr Speaker, Honourable House! There are many who do not like Jews. I do not mean those who dislike, with or without a

reason, someone such as a colleague, a neighbour who happens to have been born Jewish, but those who dislike Jews. There are anti-Semites who will say, "I have Jewish friends, too."

Honourable House! I have no Gypsy friends, but I do know Gypsy artists, writers and politicians whose personal confidence I regard as an honour and who have my true respect for their art, public work or clarity of expression. And I know unfortunate Gypsy families who are, like other poor people, no more than statistical figures, and whom I help if I can. It is in their interest, too, that we should talk about the truth, and only the truth, at last and not about the so-called sensitivities which can be activated at the touch of a button, but about an elementary sense of justice at long last. Because we've had enough of calculated lies, well-financed smokescreen-laying, artificial martyrdom, the vilification of Hungarians, the defamation of Hungary.

It is unacceptable that some people should programmatically confuse the cause of our Gypsy fellow-citizens, the tragic plight of the Roma of Hungary, with the well-managed package tour of the Zámoly tourists to the accompaniment of left-liberal wailing. It is unacceptable that some people should degrade the issue of a persistent, inherited problem of our entire society, an issue of genuine strategic and political concern, to the level of party politicking, damaging their country and the Gypsy population, too, once again, without themselves risking anything. Honourable House! This is not the responsibility of scribes but the cowardice of the kibitzer.

Honourable House! It is to be clearly understood that the argument is not about the assessment of the serious situation of our Gypsy population, but about the question whether the left-liberal undermining of the Roma issue is an honest thing to do. Because what else should it be regarded when Krasznai, the media-star, announces to the world that what the current government is doing is no more than the continuation of what was begun by its predecessor in '44, i. e. by the Arrow-Cross Party, with other means, and it is the physical annihilation of the Gypsy population? What should this be? The charge of a holocaust? How come that while the man, according to one sober and genuinely authoritative politician of MSZP, is no hero, the head of the MSZP's Gypsy division and, incidentally, a fellow deputy-chairman of Krasznai's in the Roma Parliament, declares, and I quote, "We also regard József Krasznai as a hero to whom we should be grateful, as well as to the Roma of Záhony, for having saved the honour of Hungarians." Saved? Them?

How come that the Strasbourg media razzmatazz was supported and organised, for example, by the International Socialist Solidarity Committee, the Revolutionary Communist League, university lecturer Kathy Katz, Jerusalem, Michael Warschawski, Jerusalem, Lea Tsemel lawyer, Jerusalem, Mirei Warschawski, Jerusalem, chief rabbi Max Warschawski, Jerusalem, and others. Who benefited from that? And who orchestrated, in the left-liberal press, articles like the one which says, I quote *(he reads)*, "The government of Hungary shamelessly denies the fact, which no longer needs," attention here, "proving. It," meaning the government, "denies the persecutions and the apartheid which are covered up and controlled by the public institutions." And if those describing themselves as liberals at home maintain that the OFPRA has nothing to do with the government of France, then why is it that they have thanked the head of the French government for granting refugee status? Or did they perhaps not know that OFPRA, as a bureau protecting refugees and the homeless, is an office belonging to the foreign ministry of the Republic of France? And who, then, might the refugees be?

Honourable House! In conclusion, there is something more I cannot leave unsaid, because it is infamy. The confusion of the tour of Strasbourg, the tourists, with the persecution of the heroes of '56 is nothing less than sly dishonesty, a coarse and primitive lie. Those who cannot understand that much can write letters to anyone, alone or in company, despite the fact that all the energetic eagerness to act, the goodwill whipped to agitated hysteria, could find better things to do, such as acting in the spirit of Christianity, together in the interest of helping the Gypsy population emerge from its destitution. It's time to do that, and not to mislead the Gypsy population, to harm and stigmatise Hungary, because of that we've had enough.

Thank you for your attention. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

SPEAKER: Under-secretary Csaba Hende will answer on behalf of the government.

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Thank you for the leave to speak. Mr Speaker, Honourable House! Although I will not respond to what we have just heard, allow me to seize the opportunity and present you with the brief chronology of the so-called Zámoly case from the viewpoint of government measures.

What makes that important is that we'll all have to ponder whether persecution and its encouragement or toleration by the government can be established in the case in view of the state of affairs to be presented, as the French decisions to grant refugee status might allow for such an interpretation.

Honourable House! The group of buildings on the outskirts of the village Zámoly occupied by the Roma of Zámoly as squatters was damaged by the storm of 31 October 1997. It is an issue of contention, whether the local municipality acted lawfully when decreeing that these houses be demolished. It is to be noted that according to a non-binding, appealable, court ruling, the action of the municipality was not against the law, which is why the court rejected the Roma claim for reparations.

It is important in this connection, however, that the Roma of Zámoly did not live on the streets for a moment, as they were accommodated partly by the local municipality on the premises of the local community centre and partly by the National Gypsy Self-Government in various ways. It is to be noted that the period between October of 1997 and July of '98, that is the change of government, the issue was far from settled by the previous government. It was under the present government that the National Gypsy Self-Government, an organisation funded from the country's budget, procured, with the support and agreement of government authorities, a plot on which it built detached houses.

Much can be said of these houses, but a few things need to be emphasised by all means. First, the houses thus erected are of a much higher quality than the property damaged by the storm in which the Roma had lived before. Secondly, the new property was built exclusively from government funds, without any financial contribution, or even in the form of labour, by the Roma of Zámoly, despite the fact that they had signed a contract pledging to put in 600 work-hours per family.

The case took a regrettable turn on 28 August 1999, when Ferenc Csete, a young man from Csákvár, lost his life under circumstances involving a powerful hit against the nape of his neck while trying to flee; incidentally, he sustained several other injuries, but the

wound on the nape of his neck, inflicted in cold blood as he tried to escape, was the immediate cause of his death.

It was after such antecedents that negotiations between government agencies and representatives of the Zámoly Roma were held on 12 May 2000. It was agreed at those talks that the construction of the houses being built for the Roma would be concluded – in that year already with the help of Roma labour –, the funding of which was provided by us; further, the Roma families were to be enabled to secure their livelihood with work, rather than from aids through being involved in an agricultural project whereby they could raise small animals, a project sponsored by the government; further, the Police Headquarters of Fejér County undertook to post a resident constable at Zámoly and to intensify patrolling and, added to that, to open a telephone hotline whereby the commanders of the police headquarters can be contacted; and beyond all that, the government undertook to finance a conflict-management programme to mediate between the majority and minority populations of the village.

Compared to that, the Roma broke the agreement and went abroad, which has great relevance to the issue, and which I will return to on another occasion. During their stay abroad at least five of their numbers can be proved to have returned to Zámoly, the village where they were supposedly persecuted and their lives endangered, to collect, in person, the welfare *(Interruptions from the ranks of MSZP: Time!)* and other allowances that were, incidentally, their rightful due.

Thank you for the attention. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

27 MARCH 2001

SPEAKER: Mr Loránd Hegedűs Jr., deputy-head of the MIÉP-faction, has also asked for leave to make an ante-agenda speech entitled "The adventures of the Zámoly Roma".

MR LORÁND HEGEDŰS JR. (MIÉP, ante-agenda speech): Mr Speaker, Honourable House! "Taught by his dastardly masters / He would not kick back but silently swore / And the one who has kicked him about / Will delight in kicking him more." The poet Ady's vatic prophecy was gorily borne out by the twentieth century's red troikas of Kun–Stromfeld–Szamuely, Rákosi–Gerő–Farkas, the thugs of No. 60 Andrássy út panting for revenge, Maniu's guardists who beheaded Székely lads, the Cetniks with their horrifying massacre of 40 thousand Hungarians in the Bácska region, and the *malenky robot* [Russian for 'a little work'] costing the lives of 40 thousand Hungarians from the Sub-Carpathian region and a 100 thousand more from rump Hungary.

After that much kicking about, it came as no surprise to the nation that 40 ultraliberal so-called intellectuals – taking a delight in kicking as it were – expressed their gratitude to the French nation and the French prime minister for sheltering a group who had presumably kicked and beat to death a young Hungarian man from Csákvár. Traitors to the fatherland they cannot be called, for they have never identified themselves for the momentary stirring of the soul with the Hungarian nation, with its fate, history, culture or life. We have to declare that in their person the fraction of a minority intends to win over to

their side, to use as a hostage if need be, the largest, stigmatised, minority of the country in order that they can give went to their vile anti-Hungarian instincts; that using their Israeli comrades-in-arms and crudely violating the constitution of Hungary, they perpetrate incitement of an ethnic, racial, character.

György Spiró wrote the following, as yet before the downfall of the communist dictatorship, of 'deep-Hungarians': "Oh, if only they could suck blood, fizzling, once again!" Well, here they are, the blood-suckers who cannot even be categorised as László Németh's 'thin-Hungarians', who feed their anti-Hungarian discrimination, painted over with the reptilian glazing of equitable treatment, on the blood of the young Hungarian man of Csákvár as leeches living on the nation's body.

That despite the extradition request issued by the Republic of Hungary's Minister of Justice, the Republic of France acknowledged persons who are presumably common criminals as refugees brings shame upon the land, as they call it, of "liberty, equality and fraternity". Even greater is the shame that the human rights committee of Hungary's Parliament put, on the grounds of all that, the SZDSZ-initiated discussion of Kaltenbach's ethnic-national anti-discrimination move on its agenda. The proposed legislation intends, by inverting the principle of the burden of proof and thus perpetuating the charge of blood, to achieve, to the detriment of the majority Hungarian population, that the accused party be obliged to prove that they exercised no discrimination, and with the introduction of the elusive concept of indirect discrimination, would discover, just as totalitarian paranoia can find a pitch-black cat in a dark room, discrimination where there is none. To crown these far from negligible efforts with success, the aliens reducing the Hungarians to the rank of aborigines would maintain, on the Hungarian taxpayer's money, a network of professional informers carrying out spot checks.

The danger of their aspirations is indicated by the expert background machinery that has managed the adventures of the Zámoly Gypsies, including Katalin Katz, lecturer of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who is, just like her associates, unlikely ever to consider supporting, with a single dollar, the families of the children massacred by the Israeli army. The question arises in connection with the background: is it possible that the Mossad, considered to be the best-organised secret service in the world, was unaware of the fact that its new citizens mounted, within the framework of the secret service operated by the country of their former or double citizenship, a defamation campaign against a third country in a fourth one? In that case I would say that it was the worst-organised service in the world, something not even the most intense racial prejudice could make one say.

Traitors to the country the signatories cannot be called though, but traitors to '56 they can. *(Murmur from the benches of SZDSZ and MSZP.)* To compare the asylum given by the French to the 56-ers to sheltering those who are presumably common criminals ranks, to quote the words of the great French writer Albert Camus on the revolution of '56, as the dirtiest, vilest betrayal, beneath which no scribe can sink. In a Europe left to its own resources, the only way we can be true to Hungary *(Interruption from Dr. Zoltán Kis)*, is if we never betray anywhere that which the Hungarian fighters gave their lives for, and never vindicate murderers anywhere. If those vindicating the presumable murderers of Hungarians would take delight in seeking adventure, because they find it so utterly unbearable that after all that the Hungarians still fail to kick back but at least swear, if ever so dismally, then there certainly will be 40 Hungarian intellectuals to say thank you to any of

the countries involved in the aforementioned campaign meant to defame Hungary, if they give them shelter. Thank you.

SPEAKER: I ask whether anybody wishes to speak. I give Under-secretary Dr. Csaba Hende leave to speak. *(Dr. Zoltán Kis: Praise him.)*

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Thank you for the leave to speak. Mr Speaker, Honourable House! We are at a loss for words at hearing of the decision made by the refugee authorities of France. *(Interruption from Dr. István Szent-Iványi – László Keller: Not at the address? – Mihály Varga: We'll listen to you, too, Laci!)* I will listen to the Honourable Member, if he wishes to speak on the matter, as I'd like it very much if the Socialist Party spoke up on the issue at last. *(Mihály Varga: Hear! Hear! – Interruptions from the MSZP benches.)*

Allow me to tell a story, the story of Melinda Lakatos and her children. *(Dr. János Veres: Evasion. – Dr. Mária Kóródi: That's connivance with MIÉP!)* That lady left for Strasbourg last summer and returned, with her three sick children, to Zámoly on February 20 this year. *(Interruptions from the ranks of SZDSZ.)* She did so, as she says, which you could all hear on TV, because she had not been able to get appropriate medical treatment in Strasbourg in the absence of an interpreter. The village of Zámoly, the heads of the village, which is said to be xenophobic and racist, took prompt action to ensure that the children should receive, without a social security card or any other formality, medical treatment and the necessary medication, so they could go to nursery school without delay, and, I'm embarrassed to admit, I myself was the one who obtained, via the Maltese Charity Service, children's clothes, a pram, cots, and a kitchen range *(Dr. Mária Kóródi: A kitchen range? From rubbish clearance?!)*

It was I myself, too, who talked to the officials of the Fejér County Police Headquarters, who reassured me on the one hand that peaceful coexistence between the Roma of Zámoly – the Roma of Zámoly! – and the non-Roma population of Zámoly has been undisturbed in the past year as, to clear up any misunderstanding, the majority of the group that left for Strasbourg did not consist of the original Roma inhabitants of Zámoly but of later settlers, and the village had not had any conflict whatsoever with the real Roma of Zámoly, and they have not had any in recent times either. So they reassured me on the one hand that there is no conflict whatsoever involving the Roma of Zámoly and that nobody had looked at Melinda Lakatos and her children askance, let alone harassed them after their return home. True, she said she'd been rung up by József Krasznai after she came home; Krasznai demanded her immediate return to Strasbourg as her resettlement in Hungary and her peaceful stay at home badly damaged the others' chances of getting refugee status.

The Ministry of Social and Family Affairs disbursed urgent relief to the family and so did the Public Endowment for the Roma of Hungary. The 50 thousand forints urgent relief of the endowment's chairman was personally delivered by a departmental head of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities to Melinda Lakatos, whom he then drove in his office car to the Székesfehérvár Tesco, where they bought nappies, detergents and food – I've been having gnawing doubts ever since whether it was according to protocol *(Dr. Zoltán Kiss: No, unfortunately not.)* that she was driven in a state car to the shops. *(Interruptions from the ranks of the MSZP and the SZDSZ: No, that's no solution!)* But

then that, too, must be a conspicuous manifestation of persecution by government authorities. *(Dr. Zoltán Kis: And so it is.)*

I would like to tell you that the mayor of Zámoly promised, in order to improve the lot of the family, to give Melinda Lakatos's father steady public work. In order to provide Melinda Lakatos and her family with permanent accommodation, we have made preparations for and started talks about the renovation of one of the houses that had been built, exclusively from government resources, for every Roma family of Zámoly who had lost their home.

To provide accommodation for her parents, who also have housing problems, we have started talks about letting them move into another house also built for the Roma of Zámoly and asked them to keep an eye on the condition of the houses as caretakers of sorts, because unknown perpetrators have seriously damaged these homes, removing their fittings, doors, windows and other parts.

After these antecedents, we were astounded to hear that Melinda Lakatos had left for Strasbourg with her children on March 13. Our surprise was even greater on learning that the refugee authorities of France granted refugee status to them on the grounds of their having been persecuted in their home country. *(The Speaker indicates that speaking time has run out by tapping the bell.)*

Thank you for your attention. *(Applause from government benches. – Interjection from the ranks of SZDSZ: How about the words of the bloody-minded pastor?! – Dr. Zoltán Kis: The disgrace of it! – Mihály Varga: That much goes into five minutes. – Dr. Gábor Kiss: The Under-secretary of the Minister of Justice! – László Keller: You shouldn't be surprised!)*

SPEAKER: Gabriella Selmeczi, MP for Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party wishes to put a question to the foreign minister. [...]

GABRIELLA SELMECZI (FIDESZ): Mr Speaker, Mr Under-secretary! The case of the Zámoly Roma has been in the public eye, stirring up ever new emotions for more than half a year now. Due to various forms of harassment, the mayor and the population of the village have now come to the point that they ask public figures and representative of the media not to mention the name of their village together with those who left for Strasbourg, as those were Zámoly residents only so far as they squatted in homes there, and ceased to be of Zámoly residence when they left the country under controversial circumstances.

I can't and won't try to pass judgement on the case, but I am astounded to see that biassed and partial information is enough to start a war of internal politics against the civic coalition, a coalition which has done more for the Gypsy population of Hungary than any other administration before it. *(László Keller: What?)* A Roma person who intends to study will be supported; the one who works has access to all social benefits and that often on the basis of positive discrimination. And then one has to see that an international scandal is stirred up around a case whose every detail is unclear, including the violent death of a young Hungarian man from Csákvár.

I regret to see in my constituency that the hysteria whipped up is utterly detrimental to honest Gypsy people, that the population are getting more and more indignant, and I don't know whether those who started this process will be able to stop it. Meantime, I know of cases in Pest County where streets and parts of villages are terrorised by Roma criminals.

People in my constituency ask me who is going to protect them from such harassment. They have no money to travel to Strasbourg; all they want is to live undisturbed in their country, in Hungary.

I ask you, Under-secretary, what the foreign affairs administration has done to make sure that the French authorities pass judgement on this very grave case on the basis of the real situation and not the arguments of those continually vilifying the country. *(The Speaker indicates that speaking time has run out by tapping the bell.)*

Thank you. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

SPEAKER: [...] Under-secretary Mr Zsolt Németh answers the question.[8]

ZSOLT NÉMETH (Under-secretary of foreign affairs): Mr Speaker, Honourable House! Honourable Member! What has the foreign affairs administration done? First, I would like to point out what it has not done. The foreign affairs administration has not had consultations with the refugee authorities of France, with OFPRA, because they have not contacted us, they have not involved us in the procedure. Had Hungary initiated contact, that could have been interpreted as exerting pressure. At the same time, OFPRA has in fact consulted the government of Hungary indirectly through the government of France or, more specifically, via the French embassy here. The foreign affairs administration discharged its obligation of providing information on about half a dozen occasions.

This is a regrettable situation; it might have been different if OFPRA had not handed down an unfounded decision. However, I should add that we do not as yet know the reasons for the judgement, and it will happen to any office to make an unfounded decision. After all, the Gypsy population is not institutionally persecuted in Hungary, which is acknowledged even by the chairman of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee; occasional discrimination does occur, but it is as infrequent as it is in any Western European country, as for instance in France, and the Hungarian authorities provide adequate protection against such incidents.

There are two things Hungary will have to beware of: first, it should not equate the opinion of OFPRA with the opinion of the international community or even with the opinion of the French government. That is far from the case, as the position taken by the European Committee is much closer to the opinion of the international community or even the opinion of the French government, which recognises the efforts made by Hungary's government. Secondly, we'll have to resist the temptation to discontinue the Roma-policy initiated by the government. Even if our efforts were not recognised, which is not the case, even then we ought to carry on with that work.

Thank you for your attention. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

SPEAKER: I give leave to member Gabriella Selmeczi to respond to the answer.

GABRIELLA SELMECZI (FIDESZ): Thank you, Mr Speaker. Honourable Under-secretary! I thank you for your answer. Unfortunately, these are times when it seems that the foreign-affairs administration should do more to achieve its purposes, as it is reported that five

[8] In the absence of the foreign minister.

Roma families are about to leave the Socialist-led town of Komló – they, too, are supposed to be persecuted. *(László Keller: It's repulsive what you're doing.)* Or there is an eleven-month old infant at Ozd in critical condition; the situation is now, for example, being cleared up with government support; it is with government support that the Roma colony, where incredible conditions were found to prevail, is being cleaned up.

But to sum up my opinion, Honourable Members, the Hungarians should not be standing around with eyes downcast in the face of any other decision, as the Roma are not persecuted in Hungary, especially not in an institutional manner. Ever since King Stephen I the saint, Zámoly Hungary has been an open, hospitable country.

Thank you very much. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP. – József Csige: That was some poor showing, you've let down the sides badly! – András Gyürk: That was pretty good, it sure was!)*

SPEAKER: Under-secretary, the floor is yours to answer again.

ZSOLT NÉMETH (Under-secretary of foreign affairs): Honourable Member! What I'd repeatedly like to emphasise is that Hungary should be able to present its Roma-policy with authenticity, and the foreign-affairs administration has its share of responsibility in that, but it cannot take all responsibility alone. Possibly, the non-governmental organisations, and the political parties should also make efforts to enable the international community to inform itself authentically rather than exploit this extremely delicate issue for the purposes of domestic politics.

Thank you so much for the attention. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties and from MIÉP.)*

SPEAKER: [...] Honourable House! Dr. Róbert Répássy, MP for Fidesz has submitted an interpellation to the government entitled "What is the consequence of a judge's order of arrest? Custody at home, refugee status elsewhere?" Honourable Member, the floor is yours.

DR. RÓBERT RÉPÁSSY (Fidesz): Thank you for the leave to speak, Mr Speaker. Honourable Under-secretary! Contradictory news reports have been released about the case involving Hungarian citizens against whom an independent Hungarian law-court issued an order of arrest and who were granted asylum in a foreign country, or at least they applied for asylum. Please, help this House see clearly in the matter.

Is it true that in recent days another European country with which we have signed an agreement on judicial assistance in criminal matters has accepted the claim for asylum submitted by Hungarian citizens who are involved in a criminal investigation and against whom extradition proceedings are under way? Is it true that the Hungarian citizens in question would have been faced with custody and a court trial if they had been in the territory of this country? Is it true that the said persons have been indicted by Hungarian prosecutors?

Is it known to other European countries that law courts in Hungary function under their own jurisdiction, independently of the government and the parliament of the country? Does the principle of reciprocity apply *vis-à-vis* the said country, i. e. do we mutually accommodate pleas for extradition with the said country? Can you confirm that there is a person among the said Hungarian citizens who has been granted asylum in violation of the Geneva

Convention insofar as he or she returned, in the course of the refugee proceedings, to the country, to Hungary, where he or she claims to have escaped from?

Has the Ministry of Justice done everything to ensure that the Hungarian authorities can enforce their penal claims on the said persons?

I await your answer, Mr Under-secretary. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties – Dr. Emil Bogdán applauds.)*

SPEAKER: Dr. Csaba Hende responds to the interpellation. I give leave to speak.

Dr. Csaba Hende (Under-secretary of justice): Mr Speaker! Honourable Member, Honourable House! Under the Geneva Convention, the refugee authorities of the country which have accepted a claim for refugee status do not inform the country against which the claim has been accommodated of their ruling, whether that ruling be positive or negative. Accordingly, the French refugee authority which has proceeded in the case of the Zámoly Roma has not sent its ruling to the Hungarian authorities either, which means that we have not been officially notified of who and on what pretext has been granted refugee status.

Extradition proceedings between the Republic of Hungary and the Republic of France are conducted in accordance with the European agreement signed on 1 December 1957 in Paris.

After the bill of indictment was accepted, the Court of Fejér County issued an international warrant for the arrest of two Roma persons of Zámoly domicile, who had been staying in Strasbourg since August of 2000. The two persons in question are accused of having been involved in a series of criminal acts perpetrated on 28 August 1999, in the course of which Ferenc Csete, a 21-year-old man of Csákvár domicile, lost his life under tragic circumstances in consequence of a powerful strike administered with the handle of a tool to the nape of his neck, which serves as the basis of the inquiry into manslaughter and other criminal acts.

In accordance with the agreement, the Minister of Justice forwarded via diplomatic channels a plea for extradition to the French party. The plea was delivered by the Hungarian Embassy on 16 February 2001. Via our embassy in Paris we have been informally informed that after delivery of the extradition plea, the fifth defendant in the case was granted refugee status.

The fifth defendant is charged, under Section Two (1) of Article 271 of the Penal Code, with brutal conduct perpetrated in a group as co-perpetrator. Under the Penal Code this crime is punishable by imprisonment for up to three years. Custody would, in principle, be feasible in the presence of the judge's ruling and other legal conditions. It is common knowledge that brutal conduct is a legal crime with no political ramifications whatsoever and thus it does not qualify as a political crime under the European extradition agreement.

Honourable Member! It is true that such persons submitted claims for refugee status in France as returned to Hungary during the refugee proceedings and, what is more, they collected their social allowances at Zámoly, that is the village where they were supposedly exposed to life-threatening persecution. As an example, Melinda Lakatos and her three children stayed with her parents at Zámoly between 20 February and 13 March, and then was granted refugee status on 15 March. Under the Convention, if a refugee voluntarily returns to the country which he or she had left, the Convention no longer applies. That, however, means no more than the fact that the state examining the refugee claim

or the state granting refugee status is no longer obliged to extend protection according to the Convention. It does not mean that the state in question has no right to extend such protection.

Honourable Member! As the Ministry of Justice fulfilled its obligation to the letter, in that it forwarded the extradition plea made in accordance with the warrant of arrest in time, I ask you to accept my answer.

Thank you for obliging me with your attention. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties.)*

SPEAKER: I ask the Honourable Member submitting the interpellation if he accepts the answer.

DR. RÓBERT RÉPÁSSY (FIDESZ): Thank you very much, Under-secretary, for your answer. I have been reassured by your answer so far as the conduct of the Ministry of Justice is concerned. The facts presented in your answer have not, however, reassured me, but that does not concern the conduct of the government of Hungary but the conduct of the state granting the refugee status.

Therefore, the answer has not reassured me, but there can be no doubt that the Ministry of Justice has done everything in order that the Republic of Hungary enforce its penal claim on the citizens in question in accordance with the Penal Code. That is why I accept your answer. Thank you very much. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties.)*

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, post-agenda speech): [...] Honourable House! Backs to Europe – for the fiftieth time. It's an anniversary. Once again, I have to speak about how the Fidesz-Smallholder-MDF-government has turned its back on European norms.

When in Europe – Germany, France, England or Italy – the public is confronted with anti-minority discrimination, xenophobia, racism, then they do three things: they examine the causes, find the measures required for a long-term solution, and take a positive stand against it without delay. Contrariwise, the Hungarian government says that there is no problem in Hungary after all, not in comparison with that which is customary in Europe, and those who say that the problem is serious, do not tell the truth and are the enemies of the country. In an official communiqué the government said that the asylum granted in Strasbourg is unfounded, unjust and unfair.

Why is it unfounded? Were the houses not demolished from above their heads? Did they not seek a quiet abode in Hungary in vain? Under-secretary Csaba Hende said a few days ago at a formal press conference that those who criticise what is going on in Hungary are against Hungary; just as the critics at home and abroad were told under communist regimes that they were anti-Soviet, anti-Hungarian, anti-Polish, anti-Czechoslovakian, anti-Romanian. Can we still remember?

Honourable House! To what extent this government stands with its back to Europe was heard today, excuse me: yesterday,[9] here in this House. When I chose this issue for tonight I had no knowing how topical it in fact would be. Yesterday morning a genuine Nazi speech was heard here in parliament, which was Nazi inasmuch as it excluded from the nation

[9] By the time the post-agenda address was made it was past midnight.

those who had said thank you to France in connection with the case of the Zámoly Roma, and this exclusion was made on the basis of descent. It was full of allusions like the one to 'the Israeli connection'. Honourable House! In this country, in this region, it is well known to all what that means.

That such a speech can be made in Hungary's parliament by a speaker for the Hungarian Nazi party is a grave problem in itself. But even greater is the problem that the Under-secretary of justice of the current government has nothing to say against Nazi hate-speech. That is, Honourable House, what would be simply unthinkable in England, France, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, and I could go on. The fact that the Under-secretary of the Orbán-government has not a word to say against Nazi hate-speech, but apparently sympathises with it, that, Honourable House, has been the gravest event that has occurred in parliament in recent weeks.

Thank you for your attention. *(Applause in the ranks of SZDSZ.)*

28 MARCH 2001

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, speech[10]): The approach taken by the speakers for the Hungarian Democratic Forum today and of the government is that everybody should sit quietly on their backsides, everybody should know the place they were born and should not want to leave that place. The Roma of Zámoly should stay in Hungary and it should not occur to them to look for a better life anywhere else, and the [ethnic] Hungarians of neighbouring countries should also stay where they are rather than contemplate how they could find a better livelihood in Hungary. The Afghan, the Bangladeshi, the Kosovars and the others had better remember that they were born in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and so on, and they should not want to come to Hungary to disturb us here.

The Free Democrats see things differently. We think that if the Roma of Hungary feel here in Hungary that the conditions of their lives are such that they must flee from Hungary, then we should not hold them responsible, but examine ourselves to see why things are what they are. If Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries conclude that they cannot live happily there any longer, but want to come here instead, then we should think about it. Let us help them to live there as good and happy Hungarians, but if they should come here, we ought to give them assistance with that, too. And if there are people in the world from Afghanistan and Bangladesh to Kosovo whose conditions are such that they choose our country for the destination where they flee to, then we ought to allow them to do so. [...]

DR. KÁROLY KONTRÁT (political Under-secretary of the interior, answer to questions about a proposed amendment[11]): [...] Allow me to make one more observation. The Honourable Member Mr Bauer used the expression "the escape of the Zámoly Roma". I

[10] The speech was made in the debate of the proposed amendment to the laws regulating citizenship, immigration and asylum.

[11] The text was spoken as part of an answer given to responses made to the proposed amendment of the citizenship, immigration and refugee laws.

would like to call the attention of the Honourable House and the Honourable Member to the fact that escape, to the mind of Hungarians, does not mean that, that is, they will not associate the term with the departure of the Zámoly Roma who crossed the Hungarian border with a passport and as participants of a package tour with valid travelling documents. The border guards received them, provided them with the necessary information, they had coffee or tea as they wished, they even danced – that, to my mind, is not an escape. Escape, to speak of recent times, has been known in Hungary's history since 1948, then there was the escape of '56, which was mentioned by the Honourable member Mr Gyimesi. I tell you, Honourable Member, that you are either unfamiliar with the facts, with the circumstances under which the Zámoly Roma left the country, or else you've been misled. [...]

DR. LÁSZLÓ VARGA (Fidesz, post-agenda speech): Mr Speaker, Honourable House! I rise to speak on behalf of Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party and the Hungarian Christian Democratic Association.

The case of the Zámoly Roma who have departed for abroad has received ample media coverage at home and internationally alike. All we know from the French refugee authorities is that the Roma have been granted refugee status. That brief communication held more than one surprise for us. True, they have the right, under the Geneva Convention, to withhold any further information; we are nevertheless surprised to see that there might be a democratic government in Europe which fails to notify another democratic government. We are together in NATO and will be, as I hope, together in the European Union, too, and our globalised world is also characterised by getting closer to one another, that we inform one another, that we co-operate culturally, economically and in police matters, too. And then these things evaporate all of a sudden as the refugee authority of France settles the matter with one single sentence. We do not know what exactly is behind that.

There is one thing that I do know for sure, and that's that they have not been given political asylum. According to international custom, political asylum is only granted those who can prove beyond reasonable doubt that if they returned to their home country, they would be exposed to political persecution. That is impossible, for there is, thank goodness, no political persecution in Hungary, there are no political trials and no political prisoners. Not even those are called to account who served, at the detriment of nation and humanity, the Soviet Union and the Hungarian Communist Party.

Beyond that, however, it is clear that we'll have to consider the question on what grounds they have been given asylum. Such grounds might include an extra-social existence, unemployment, poverty, which are, in essence, humanitarian considerations, and if the authorities, the refugee authorities, of France decide to throw their gates open to all those Europeans who are in a similar position on the same grounds, then we can make no objections if thousands or hundreds of thousands of Kurds go to France, and I wonder if they, too, will be granted refugee status.

The issue therefore arises that there might be some particular reason here for the Roma of Zámoly having been granted refugee status for such peculiar reasons and amidst such great publicity.

The other issue arising in this connection is that the problem of the Roma in Hungary undoubtedly awaits solution. That won't be easy as what is at issue is a centuries-old

problem. The only solution can be achieved with the co-operation of three factors: government measures, social participation, and the will of the Roma population – their willingness to co-operate with the government and with society at large.

I feel that the government has done more in recent years than in the previous half-century put together in order that the Gypsy population can study, find employment and receive welfare benefits. There is nothing much to boast about society's contributions. Let us face it: there is aversion and a certain co-operation is difficult to achieve, but the readiness on the part of the Roma also appears to be weak in terms of the young people's willingness to work as hard at its studies as will achieve all that equal opportunities have to offer. I am unwilling to cite foreign examples, but the issue involving the black population of the United States has been on the agenda for a hundred years now and the problem is still not solved, even though fairly good progress has of course been made. When I went to college in America, there were black students there already – today there are black lawyers, black doctors and a black aristocracy. But I see fewer black men with white women or black women with white men in New York City than I did 50 years ago. Integration is a very difficult process, but progress has been made in the realm of equal opportunities.

I feel that we all have to work together in this matter, for it is in our mutual interest, but the letter written by those forty people, forty Hungarian citizens to the French government or the French refugee authorities, a letter written in the spirit of enthusiasm and elation because a few families had been granted refugee status, is something I do not believe to be right, because if someone has a demand to make about the issue, that demand should be made at home, any criticism should be voiced at home, and anything that can be done should be done at home. I may be very badly misinformed, but I do not know what the forty signatories had done to improve the situation of the Roma. And to damage the esteem accorded to the government abroad is something that I do not think is ethical public behaviour and I feel *(the Speaker indicates that speaking time has run out by tapping the bell)* that the forty signatories, and I'll be finished now, have earned themselves a poor grade in public morality.

I ask the Honourable House to help, in accord with the co-operation of society, the assistance of the government and the willingness of the Roma, to find a solution.

Thank you. *(Applause from the benches of the governing parties.)*

SPEAKER: Under-secretary Dr. Csaba Hende wishes to respond.

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): Thank you for the leave to speak. Mr Speaker! Honourable Member! Honourable House! Let us begin with the decision handed down by the refugee authorities of France.

It is a fact that the French office called OFPRA does not, as the Honourable Member told us, communicate the reasons for its decisions, and its positive decisions contain no reasons at all, while the negative ones do. But not even that is communicated to the sending countries. For that reason we are boxing with shadows, as we do not know what reasons might be behind the positive decisions. To tell the truth, we cannot understand these decisions, for if it is not a good thing to be a Roma in Hungary today, it has been that way for

a very long time. I'm afraid we have a very long way to go before the Roma are fully integrated into society.

But to say that our Roma compatriots are persecuted appears to be a gross exaggeration.

Looking back at the history of the Zámoly families in particular, at whatever has happened to them in the past year, I cannot, however hard I look, discover any fact or circumstance indicating persecution. Quite the contrary: after the destruction by storm of their homes, which they had arbitrarily occupied, and after the demolition of the life-threatening ruins in accordance with the permission of the local municipality, the Roma of Zámoly were given new homes financed and built exclusively from government resources, homes which were of an incomparably higher quality than the ones they had lost under the said circumstances.

Three types of refugee status are recognised under the law of France. One is called convention refugee status and is provided for by the Geneva Convention; another one is the type of constitutional refugee status, and the third is the regional refugee status. In that sense the internal law of France makes no mention of political refugee status.

To be granted convention refugee status, which then is provided for by the Geneva Convention, the claimant is obliged, to quote the essence and not the letter of the law, to prove that he or she was persecuted in their home country – not necessarily for political reasons, Honourable Member – or that he or she has good reasons for fearing persecution on return to their country. The application of the Geneva law prescribes that such persecution primarily be carried out by government authorities. That is obviously not the case here. No-one in perfect seriousness can mean to say that he Republic of Hungary persecuted any one of its citizens.

Another case is when a third party, a well or less well organised group or individuals, practise persecution, but the government does not extend the protection that it can be expected to guarantee. There may be several problems with the Republic of Hungary, but it cannot be said that the system of government institutions is out of operation or that there are no means and fora at the disposal of those in need of legal remedy. Three days ago another ruling was handed down by a court in the North of Hungary involving the case of a restaurant owner who had banned Roma customers from his disco. The young Roma filed a suit; their case stood up and the Hungarian court ordered that the landlord be fined 200,000 forints.

Yes, there is the rule of law here *(the Speaker indicates that speaking time has run out by tapping the bell)*, the state authorities are operational and guarantee reasonable legal remedy.

Thank you very much. *(Applause from the benches of Fidesz.)*

30 MARCH 2001

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, ante-agenda speech): [...] It is unsightly, indeed, when the government deals with, or tries to deal with, unpleasant signs of the ills of society which we see by having recourse to secret-service utterances. When a group of the Zámoly Roma were granted refugee status in Strasbourg, the minister in charge of the secret services came forward with the statement that he could neither confirm nor deny the news that the Russian secret service was behind the bid of the Zámoly Roma to find a liveable life abroad.

Then, as I am told, it became clear in the national security committee that he had nothing to support the claim with, but he still went on and on making allusions.

17 APRIL 2001

SPEAKER: [...] Honourable House! Independent Member Róbert Molnár submitted an interpellation entitled "Confusion about the Roma, or a few words about an orchestrated hullabaloo" to the minister in charge of the Prime Minister's Office. The interpellation will be answered by Under-secretary Csaba Hende. Honourable Member, it's yours!

RÓBERT MOLNÁR (independent): Honourable House! And then I haven't spoken of the Roma case. The civic government has spent more on bridging the gap between the Roma and the non-Roma population than the previous governments. Despite these efforts, the West speaks about how the Gypsy population is persecuted in this country. The Roma who have escaped to Strasbourg and Canada talk about being continuously discriminated against at home.

I know several Roma people in person. There are those among them who want to work and they do get work. They send their children to school and set a good example to their fellow-Roma. They do not want to escape. They are not persecuted by the police, they aren't oppressed by anybody; true, in spite of working hard, they wouldn't have the money to pay 90-100 thousand forints on an air ticket for each member of their family.

There is then reason to ask – where does the money for the air-tickets of the unemployed and discriminated-against Roma come from? Or rather: who pays and incites the Gypsy population? Who profits by bringing shame to Hungary abroad?

I'd like to have the privilege of your answer. *(Applause from the ranks of the independents and from MIÉP; sporadic applause from the government benches.)*

SPEAKER: Thank you. The floor is yours, Under-secretary Csaba Hende.

DR. CSABA HENDE (Under-secretary of justice): [...] As for the Roma issue, I share, by and large, the opinion of Romano Prodi, head of the European Commission.

The situation of the Gypsies is an all-European problem with ramifications effecting Hungary, a problem which cannot, due to its gravity, be solved until Hungary's accession to the European Union. The countries concerned, and Hungary among them and, let me add, the Gypsy population themselves, will have to make continuous and serious efforts to improve the situation. That is what we do having trebled the budgetary expenditure on Roma-related programmes. That is why the number of Roma students receiving grants has been increased tenfold. We are convinced that the only way to the ascendancy of the Gypsy population is through studying and working.

Taking account of all these efforts we may not be quite happy but can conclude with a certain amount of satisfaction that we have done considerably more to solve the problem than most other European nations or the previous government.

The rule of law reigns in this country, where everybody is free, whether at home or abroad, to express their opinion and to give voice to their critical views on the state of public

affairs. Others, however, are also free to evaluate, examine or, as the case might be, censure the opinion expressed by the critics. Others again, as for example I myself, are free to have their opinion of all this and to keep that opinion to themselves. I thank you for your attention and ask you to accept my answer. *(Applause from the ranks of the government.)*

SPEAKER: Thank you, Under-secretary. I ask the Honourable Member whether he will accept the answer.

RÓBERT MOLNÁR (independent): Mr Speaker, Mr Under-secretary! Honourable House! I thank you and accept your answer; I'd like to add a few words to what you've said [...]

Not to ask the question of what sort of persecution is it *(Interruptions for the benches of SZDSZ: Facts! – Mr Speaker, shouldn't he be warned?)* what sort of persecution is it if the Roma of Zámoly can come home to collect their allowances? [...]

19 APRIL 2001

ISTVÁN CSURKA (MIÉP, keynote address[12]): [...] There is utter confusion about the admittance of people and the determination of their national identity in Europe. It has been reported earlier today that another two Roma families, some twenty people altogether, have been admitted to France as refugees. Whether their number includes the man who can only sign his name with three crosses I don't know, but that he is out there I'm sure. What chances the poor soul has of being integrated into the French society, whether he knows where he exactly is, are dubious. And yet he is granted refugee status, perhaps will have to struggle for a livelihood there, even as the head of the European Union, the President of the Commission, announces that the Hungarian employee, the Hungarian society will have to accept the fact that even if they are acceded to the Union soon, by 2004, they won't be allowed to be part of the free movement of labour for a while longer as the societies of Europe could not bear it – well these things should be considered together when we evaluate the so-called status law here. [...]

29 MAY 2001

IMRE MÉCS (SZDSZ, post-agenda speech): Honourable House! The Boston-based surgeon Lajos Koncz has done much for the cause of Hungarians' keeping together and for the truth of '56 to come to light. He cried out bitterly on hearing what had happened in parliament. I quote him: "It pains me to hear that an anti-Semitic speech was heard in Hungary's parliament on 27 May, the like of which had not perhaps been given by a Hungarian MP even during the most savage persecution of the Jews in 1944. What exacerbates the fact is that the one who gave it was a Calvinist minister, Loránt Hegedűs Jr." Let me add that the five-minute address was not only anti-Semitic, but it was brimming with hatred and anti-Gypsy exclusion.

[12] Made as part of the general debate of the proposed legislation on Hungarians living in neighbouring countries (the 'status law').

The object of its hatred was that letter written by 33 Hungarian intellectuals to the leaders of the Republic of France to thank them for giving shelter to those Gypsy compatriots of ours who had gone through too much indeed. I quote those unworthy words, "Traitors to the fatherland they cannot be called as they have never identified themselves for the momentary stirring of the soul with the Hungarian nation, with its fate, history, culture or life. We have to declare that in their person the fraction of a minority intends to win over to their side, to use as a hostage if need be, the largest, stigmatised, minority of the country in order that they can give went to their vile anti-Hungarian instincts; that using their Israeli comrades in arms and crudely violating the constitution of Hungary, they perpetrate incitement of an ethnic, racial, character." Unquote.

What violates the constitution is that horrible text, and those words are intolerable. [...]

30 MAY 2001[13]

LAJOS GODÓ (MSZP, keynote address): [...] These naked statistical figures[14] themselves clearly indicate that the largest ethnic minority in Hungary, the country's Gypsy population, saw no reassuring improvement in their lot; indeed, despite all the much-vaunted government programmes meant to help the Gypsy population, their situation had deteriorated.

While Europe reverberates with the story of the Zámoly Roma, parliament and its committees are loud with mutual name-calling and farcical accusations instead of our acting in concert to find a solution to our problem. [...]

DR. GÁBOR FODOR (SZDSZ, keynote address): [...] It might be enough to mention the trials and tribulations of the Zámoly Roma or the fact that their case got all the way to Strasbourg. It is not only our own, internal, business, not merely a matter for our own conscience to judge, if you will, what is happening to the Roma, but the international community also keeps an eye on what Hungary is doing, partly in consequence of the mistaken policies, which we have kept criticising in recent times. So here we stand before the international community, and we ought to act. What we see instead – and though we have already talked about it in this House, the matter must be brought up again – is that we have got no further in discussing the matter than having some people see the machinations of the Russian secret service behind what's happening to the Roma of the country, whether they are discriminated against, whether they are served in various catering establishments, whether they have their houses set on fire, whether they have Molotov cocktails thrown at them; I think that's the definition of stupidity.

The government is burying its head in the sand when it dares not face certain problems but blames them on external circumstances, which cannot explain serious internal problems. It should honestly been admitted that earlier governments have had their share of responsibility, too – all of us, including ourselves, the socialist-liberal coalition –, but especially

[13] The matter quoted here comes from the debate of the account given by the parliamentary commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights of the work done in the year 2000.

[14] The data indicating the number and distribution of complaints submitted to the Ombudsman in the account.

the current government, for nothing of any account has been done to improve the lot of Hungary's Gypsy population. That cannot be left unsaid. [...]

SÁNDOR LEZSÁK (MDF, keynote address): [...] The parliamentary commissioner himself puts it like this at the beginning of the volume, in page 6, like this: "the fact in itself that Hungarian citizens turn to a member-state of the European Union for refugee status because of their persecution in Hungary is in itself of symbolic meaning to many". We ask the question whether the behaviour is also characteristic of persecuted people from other countries whereby some of those driven out of their native country keep returning to the scene of their persecutions to collect their accumulated allowances? *(But they didn't collect them!)* [...]

MR LORÁND HEGEDŰS, JR. (MIÉP, keynote address): the first chapter of the report speeches the tendencies of the past year to arrive at what we regard as false conclusions, especially as regards the case of the Zámoly Roma. The Party of Hungarian Truth and Life [MIÉP] made its position clear earlier in an ante-agenda speech given by myself. That position we must adhere to, as we adhere to truth; it cannot be that the defence based exclusively on ethnic considerations of persons who are presumably common criminals should appear before the public – whether the Hungarian or the international public – in Hungary's legal system, while all that is really human, all that we believe to be part of democracy and the liberty, equality and fraternity that were written on the flag unfurled precisely in the French Revolution is trampled on. [...]

DR. IBOLYA DÁVID (minister of justice, short address): [...] An interjection was heard during the speech given by Sándor Lezsák. It was said that the Roma of Zámoly had not collected such an allowance. They had. More than one of them collected the allowances either in person or via a representative. That can be proved with the files kept by the mayor's office; of that the mayor himself informed me as the minister in charge of minority affairs. [...]

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, two-minute address): [...] Minister! What you had to say was of no little interest to me.

It was interesting to hear that you have the paper lying on your desk recording the fact that one or another of the Zámoly Roma had returned to Hungary to collect the allowances or that they had authorised someone to do that for them. In other words, the minister of justice is busy gathering information and evidence that can be used to discredit the Roma of Zámoly before the public of Hungary. Yes, that's what it is about. *(Dr. Ibolya Dávid: Don't be silly. – Loránt Hegedűs: The country!)* I would like to return to that in my speech. [...]

DR. IBOLYA DÁVID (minister of justice, short address): What the Honourable Member Mr Bauer had to say I must protest against. I won't have the Honourable Member insinuate that I gather data to calumniate the Roma of Zámoly. Being a regular reader of the papers, I found that many of the inhabitants of Zámoly had disapproved of the fact that the Roma of Zámoly, while claiming refugee status in Strasbourg for being harassed and

persecuted in Hungary, come home regularly to collect their allowances. Being a well-meaning citizen and a well-meaning minister, who happens to be in charge of minority affairs, I refused to believe that, and said that the mayor was the only person to refute the allegation that those leaving for Strasbourg to criticise the conditions at home should come home, in person, too, to collect that money.

Honourable Member, I regret to say that I was wrong. I was wrong as the Roma had come back, uninterested in the difficulties Hungary was faced with, and the sum collected in the year 2000 for two persons came to 146 thousand forints and another 325 thousand in family allowance after 16 children and 24 thousand as child-protection allowance after another child, for which they came home. I wouldn't believe it and wished for the mayor to tell me it wasn't true, that one with such a sad past would never set foot into the village.

Thank you so much. *(Applause from the government benches.)*

DR. GÁBOR FODOR (SZDSZ, two-minute address): I have no intention to have a duel, but I must say a word in response, as I believe that this dispute is now really about to reach its conclusion.

It's been brought up several times in connection with the Roma of Zámoly, and not only in the present dispute, but in the public discourse, too, the same thing that the Minister of Justice has just referred to, namely the issue of the allowances collected. Honestly, I don't know whether the allowances were collected or not. If the minister of justice says they have been, then it must be so.

But that is not the issue here. Not in the least, as the problem of the Zámoly Roma is not to be examined from the viewpoint of whether or not they came home for the allowances. The real issue is what these people had been through and whether the country could reach out a helping hand to assist them with their problem or not. The minister of justice must be familiar with Jenő Kaltenbach's report on the Zámoly case and she must also be familiar with the findings of the report concerning the guilty negligence of the self-government and other authorities cumulating in what it has cumulated in.

I thing if somebody is entitled to certain rights, those rights are not to be regarded as a reward. Rights are not due to someone because they have behaved themselves and collected, or did not collect, their allowances, when they were supposed to do so. It has nothing to do with that. That a citizen is entitled to some fair and honest rights in this country and that they must suffer no discrimination because they are born to be what they are has nothing, I repeat nothing, to do with our judgement of their conduct in a case like this.

And I think that that is the essence of the matter. And if we talk about something else, if we talk about the issue of the allowances, then we distract attention from the relevant issues.

Thank you for your attention. *(Applause from the benches of the SZDSZ and of the MSZP.)*

SÁNDOR LEZSÁK (MDF, two-minute address): [...] Honourable House! That is how a subordinate clause will become the main clause in the centre of an almost hour-long debate.

It is after all mainly about the habit of interjections, that tasteless habit, which we have to suffer in this House, of having people make interruptions while somebody is making a speech. The honourable member Tamás Bauer shouted in that no, it wasn't true, to which the Minister of Justice said that yes, it was, and she had facts to prove it, and that the Honourable Member had been misinformed about the story, which is true. Now that be-

came such a cardinal issue as if the whole case of the Zámoly Roma, a case that has put us to the test no doubt, was about nothing else.

Thank you very much. *(Loránd Hegedűs applauds.)*

TAMÁS BAUER (SZDSZ, speech): [...] I agree with the account and the verbal report as well in that we are faced with a turning point in the question.[15] That Zámoly story is a turning point. It's a turning point in the sense that Hungary simply cannot afford not to face up to the problem which is to be one of the most serious, if not the most serious, problems of this society in the years and decades ahead.

How has Hungary dealt with the Zámoly problem in the past few months? The prime minister said, when refugee status was granted to one Zámoly Roma after the other who escaped there, that it is a matter of self-respect for us to say, how did he put it now?, to say that the steps taken by the French, the Strasbourg, authorities are unfair, unjust, inequitable. Well, I see it differently. When the prime minister says that in terms of the minority issue Hungary is in no worse position than any other European country, then he is partly right, but partly wrong, too. He cited the fact that anti-minority prejudices have to be faced with in the old democracies of Europe, too, and that immigrants come under attack there, too, that France has its Arab problem and Germany its Turkish problem. Well, that's true. Occasionally, there are more serious attacks against immigrants in Germany or elsewhere than here.

And yet, there is a fundamental difference, Honourable House. The fundamental difference lies in the way the media, the public media, address the issue. I find it very important that the report examines in itself the issue of how hatred is aroused in overt and covert ways against the Roma minority in the media. Nothing like that can happen in the Western democracies, even if there is prejudice there, too. There the media makes conspicuous gestures, by putting minority announcers and reporters in the studios, to make viewers and society at large feel that those people are just like us. *(Loránt Hegedűs Jr. interrupts).* In the Hungarian media it's just the other way round.

The other difference is in the way politics, or the people representing politics, react. We know how, when such an anti-minority act is committed in Germany, virtually the entire political elite turns out for protest marches to protect the minorities. It is the CSU at most that abstains, a party which stands closest in Germany to the Orbán government and Fidesz. We know how President Mitterrand took a stand in cases like that in his time, and all the representatives of the political leadership of Hungary keeps explaining that the shame is not on those whose fault it is that these unfortunate people had to emigrates but the latter should be ashamed for trying to find the livelihood there which they couldn't find in Hungary.

That the most important message, Honourable House, from the one who is the social minister, in the Orwellian sense of the word, is that the emigrants are to be chastised; that Under-secretary Hende calls a press conference after the Strasbourg decisions to explain why those people are the real culprits for what had happened; I think, Minister of Justice, that calling that special press conference in itself indicates that you really have nothing to object to when I remind you of how the Under-secretary explains that those people had come home in the meantime, instead of examining what mistakes this country, not this government, but this country, had made causing their citizens to escape to a foreign country. [...]

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[15] In the Roma question.

LÁSZLÓ VINCZE (FKGP, two-minute address): Honourable Minister! Mr Speaker, Honourable House! It is very hard to say anything now that the Honourable Member Mr Bauer is whipping up emotions in connection with the Zámoly issue, and puts the heat on when the matter at hand would require a different approach. I think that when Under-secretary Mr Hende gave an excellent answer indeed on behalf of the ministry, and when he displayed a professional approach to the matter before the whole country, and I might add the whole of Europe, then it is improper to label that activity, as the entire Roma problem requires great patience and understanding, Honourable Members. I myself have a constituency where this problem is a problem. But there this migration abroad is not embraced and, what is more, situations involving the return home for allowances is condemned rather than praised, as is done by the Honourable Member.

I think that learning, as mentioned by somebody else earlier, education might be the key to the ascendancy of the young Roma, and the government has done a great deal in that area. It has done a great deal unlike people did during the previous few hundred years. I think that is the direction in which we should carry on, and study and give work. There are programmes which indeed provide the right to work. *(The Speaker indicates that speaking time has run out by tapping the bell.)* The majority of the Roma have no desire to leave the country, and they condemn this unfortunate situation, and I condemn the attitude which worsens the situation.

Thank you for your patience. *(Applause from the ranks of the governing parties.)*

DR. CSABA KURUCSAI (FKGP, two-minute address): [...] I don't think any of my fellow members would dare to say that the Honourable House or the society of Hungary didn't have very much to do about the Roma issue. I think, and all else should be prefaced by this, that the fundamental proposition is that the issue is unsettled and all we have before us are tasks!

I feel very uncomfortable at the same time when we keep receiving remarks of a legal nature about the rights that have been violated. There is an unfortunate family, and no word has been said of them so far, who have the same rights, and this is where the acoustics of the matter gets somewhat distorted, so there is a family who have lost their child, and the criminal procedure under way is now turning into its own parody, as ever since the murder, for two years that is, no acceptable situation has begun to take shape so that a satisfactory decision can be reached in terms of the duty, the obligation, of the state to deliver justice. I think if we had had that decision, then this particular Roma issue, the Zámoly issue, would have come to rest.

When talking about the Zámoly issue, we should declare that it is in the fundamental interest of the Hungarian public, the politically motivated segment of Hungary's society, that this case should move forward, and then sentiments would calm down, and a productive dialogue could be conducted.

Thank you very much. *(Applause from the benches of FKGP)*

DR. JENŐ KALTENBACH (Parliamentary commissioner of national and ethnic minority rights): [...] Honourable House, as for the oft-cited Zámoly case, my report does not address the Zámoly case. That belongs to the year '97 and I have long since closed it as a matter for the ombudsman's office. Back in '97, I was petitioned, a complaint was sent to

me about the developments that had occurred in the case. I duly examined the matter and sent my report to the appropriate authorities; with one exception they agreed with all my findings and agreed with all the proceedings. The attorney preferred charges against the mayor, who was then sentenced to paying a fine. Thus I did all that I could in my capacity of ombudsman, and from that moment on the Zámoly case ceased to exist, as no further petition related to the matter has been sent to my office for three years.

The phenomenon, however, which I pointed out does exist. Make no mistake about it, and the Honourable Member will find the appropriate reference if he will go on to the next sentence in page 6, it is not only about the emigration of the Zámoly Roma, but the emigration to Canada, too, about the regrettable fact that in terms of the number of immigrants sent to Canada, Hungary is the third, coming right after Pakistan and Sri Lanka. I think that must make the Honourable Member pause, too. What that sentence of mine says is that the very existence of this phenomenon must make one think. Honestly, I don't see what's wrong with that conclusion of mine. Doesn't it make one think? Doesn't the phenomenon exist? Isn't it true that 20 percent of those emigrating to Canada do receive refugee status? Isn't the international public influenced by that? I don't understand... [...]

The party membership of those making interruptions rather than speeches is the following: Emil Bogdán Dr. – MIÉP; József Csige – MSZP; András Gyürk – Fidesz; Gábor Horn – SZDSZ; László Keller – MSZP; Zoltán Kis, Dr. – SZDSZ; Gábor Kiss, Dr. – MSZP; Mária Kóródi, Dr. – SZDSZ; Dénes Kosztolányi, Dr. – Fidesz; Ernő Rozgonyi – MIÉP; István Szent-Iványi, Dr. – SZDSZ; Zoltán Vancsik – MSZP; Mihály Varga – Fidesz, minister of finance; János Veres, Dr. – MSZP.

The Chronology of Roma Migration

as Based on Reports Published in the Hungarian Press Between June 1997 and April 2001

Compiled by Katalin Bognár

JUNE–JULY 1997

Over 400 Slovakian Roma arrive in Finland. Certain groups arrive in Helsinki by ship from Germany, others on Malev, Finnair and CSA flights (10% of them through Budapest). Official sources in Bratislava suggest that there is a carefully planned operation behind these events.

> "Therefore officials warn anyone concerned that they should not let themselves be cheated by wheeler-dealers who see 'ethno-tourism' as an opportunity to make easy money. (*Népszabadság*, July 1, 1997)

Finland, then president state of the Council of Europe, reintroduces compulsory visas in response to the massive migration.

AUGUST 1997

Thousands of Czech Roma ask for an immigration permit to Canada (after several minor waves of emigrants). In light of press reports and interviews made with the migrants the migration fever seems likely to have been triggered by a programme aired on Nova Television in the Czech Republic which reported on the experiences of Roma who had settled down in Canada and Great Britain.

SEPTEMBER 1997

A few Hungarian Roma musician families leave for Canada with the intention of settling down there.

> "Following the emigration wave of Czech gypsies several Hungarian gypsy families have now set off for Canada. The Hungarian migrants are mainly musician families and their reason for leaving is the hope of better living conditions." (*Hungarian Television 1, Nap-kelte*, September 10, 1997)

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 1997

In response to the 'great invasion' Canada reintroduces compulsory visas for Czech citizens in October. About 3,000 Czech and Slovak Roma arrive in Dover in the same month.

"Dover is full up." (*Tolnai Népújság*, October 21, 1997)

"They are not suffering from any kind of persecution based on ethnic identity in their countries. They are simply economic refugees trying to exploit the advantages offered by British refugee law." (A declaration made by the Slovakian Embassy in London on October 20, quoted in *Új Magyarország*, October 21, 1997)

A few Hungarian Roma ask for certificates of their descent, but – as it turns out from Aladár Horváth's statement – the Roma Civil Rights Foundation issues no such certificates.

The Roma Press Centre reveals that 86 Hungarian citizens have applied for refugee status in Canada during the past few weeks.

The Canadian daily *Globe and Mail* suggests that Toronto might be undergoing a serious rise in crime rates after the Roma immigration.

"Canadian skinheads protest against the immigration of the Roma and one of the slogans they carry says: 'Canada is no garbage bin'. In other words, neither Europe, nor America, nor any welfare state wants these Roma." (*Napi Gazdaság*, November 28, 1997)

APRIL 1998

Slovak-born Canadian attorney Jiri Kubes says the example set by Roma immigrants from the Czech Republic and Slovakia will be followed by several thousand Hungarian Roma. (Fifteen thousand immigrants are mentioned six times – *Magyar Hirlap*, April 21, 1998, *Világgazdaság* April 22, 1998), several thousand are mentioned three times, e.g. in *Kelet-Magyarország* April 21, 1998, *Népszabadság* April 21, 1998).

Both the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs respond to this by issuing a statement denying the claim that masses of Hungarian Roma are preparing to leave for Canada.

"The National Gypsy Minority Self-Government condemns those who are irresponsible enough to promise the Roma to get immigration visas to the US or Canada for them. Such irresponsible action may harm both the persons concerned and the reputation of Hungary. Those who believe such promises may be risking losing their property." (Radio Kossuth, *Reggeli Krónika*, April 21, 1998)

The war of declarations about the certificates of descent breaks out in the same month.

According to information revealed by the state secretary in charge of minority affairs 200 Roma have asked for and received certificates of their gypsy descent from Budapest minority self-governments.

Csaba Tabajdi, political state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office believes the legality of issuing certificates of descent can be questioned. The government contacts the Office of Parliamentary Ombudsmen about the matter.

Press reports reveal that an increasing number of citizens of East European countries are applying for immigration permits to Canada at the Canadian Embassy in Vienna. The reports also mention the fact that administration has become slower and more difficult.

> "...the embassy at the moment is like a besieged castle. Inquirers are informed by answering machines in English and Hungarian at the embassy in Austria. There is no longer a personal information service. Applications may be sent by fax. When we begin asking questions about these new arrangements, someone tells us, rather mysteriously, that the new system has been introduced with practical considerations in mind. One thing is certain: most Hungarian Roma have no opportunity or facilities for sending a fax." (*Mai Nap*, April 23, 1998)

The national president of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Gypsies (a member of the Smallholders' Party) describes the Roma migration as "a shame for the cabinet".

MAY 1998

The interest in certificates of descent flares up again. The issuing of these certificates is described as unlawful by László Majtényi, ombudsman for data protection and Jenő Kaltenbach, parliamentary ombudsman for ethnic and minority rights.

Despite these statements, The Gypsy Minority Self-Government of Józsefváros (a district of Budapest) issues fifty certificates of descent.

Representatives in the Roma Parliament find Hungarian Roma have good reasons to migrate.

> "Hungary is a modern slave-holding society in which the politicians are worried that their slaves might leave the country." (Jenő Zsigó, president of the Roma Parliament, TV3, *Hír 3*, May 6, 1998).

Before the upcoming elections both government and opposition urge measures to improve the conditions of Roma in Hungary.

JUNE 1998

Official statistics reveal that the Canadian authorities have registered 1380 applications for refugee status, 630 in the last four months. Six thousand of the Czech Roma from the Czech Republic who emigrated to Canada in August 1997 have returned to their country.

AUGUST 1998

Groups of Roma from the Czech Republic and Slovakia arrive at Heathrow Airport every day. Those asked about their reasons for leaving refer again to the Slovak documentary aired on Czech Nova Television in August 1997.

OCTOBER 1998

A group of forty Roma from Romania arrive in Hungary and ask for refugee status at the Debrecen Reception Centre of the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs. They say they left at the advice of a travel agency in the hope of emigration to Spain. "Pseudo-refugees await expulsion", a headline reports (*Magyar Nemzet*, October 13, 1998)

NOVEMBER 1998

At the invitation of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Jenö Kaltenbach (parliamentary ombudsman for national and ethnic minority rights), Flórián Farkas (president of the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government) Lipót Höltz (Under-secretary of justice) and András Bíró (an independent expert from European Roma Rights Centre) arrive in Canada on November 16. Their report on the situation of gypsies in Hungary may be helpful in arriving at a precedent-setting judgement on the applications for refugee status submitted by two particular families, Canadian sources reveal.

The public is not informed about the journey of the delegation before the application of the two families is rejected.

JANUARY 1999

Previously expected by the end of last year and to be a precedent, decision is finally made on the case of two families of musicians, one from Budapest with two children and another from Kisvárda with four children. Several sources comment that the members of the delegation have been heard as witnesses. The members of the delegation deny this claim.

> "...the reputation of the nation has been restored, because it was found by the Canadian immigration board itself as opposed to the Hungarian or Canadian authorities that the two applicants are not entitled to refugee status... With this decision Canada has acknowledged that Hungary is a rule-of-law country where no one is persecuted." (Csaba Hende, Under-secretary of justice, *Magyar Hírlap*, January 23, 1999).

Canadian officials say on various occasions that Canada is not considering the introduction of compulsory visas for Hungarian citizens.

The attorneys representing the two Roma families appeal against the rejection of the applications, questioning the legality of the proceedings. They submit that on several scores

the opinion of the Hungarian experts heard as witnesses does not square with the statements made by international organisations in their human rights reports. Their argument is taken up favourably by some advocacy organisations in Canada.

FEBRUARY 1999

Judit Kopácsi Gelberger, head of the Canadian Roma Community and Advocacy Centre expresses concern about the fact that the affair of the two Roma families was 'virtually handled in secret', without informing Canadian advocacy organisations.

> "This is not the first example of the head of the Canadian refugee and immigration authority asserting his political will, so we will demand that he leave his post." (*Magyar Hírlap*, February 2, 1999)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs issues several statements to confirm the fact that the Hungarian government does everything in its power to help the Roma who wish to return home. Those who return may receive special financial aid from the consulate allowed by the consul in 'extreme emergencies', if refunding can be assured.

The government has contacted the International Organisation for Migration about the problem of the Roma who cannot pay their return fare, news reports say.

The Roma Social Solidarity Foundation demands that the Hungarian government should secure the observance of fundamental human and civil rights for the minorities of Hungary.

> "If this does not happen, we will have to escape to Canada or England." (Ágnes Daróczi, Romédia Foundation, *Magyar Nemzet*, February 17, 1999)

JUNE–JULY 1999

The Austrian authorities expel to Hungary Romanian Roma who arrived in Austria from the Czech Republic.

Over a thousand (some sources say 1069) Slovakian Roma ask for refugee status in Finland. Finland introduces compulsory visas for Slovakian citizens for a period of four months.

AUGUST 1999

According to Slovakian Minister of the Interior Ladislav Pitter the emigration of Slovakian Roma is being organised from the background in Hungary.

> "The so called Budapest gypsy centre has contacts with Roma in Slovakia and a certain organisation has received substantial support from Switzerland." (Ladislav Pitter in the Slovakian daily *Narodna Obroda*, reported in *Magyar Hírlap*, August 4, 1999)

"It is the Slovakian opposition rather than Budapest that wants to bring its own government into disrepute. Mečiar and his circle may be behind the organised exodus of the gypsies." (Árpád Duka-Zólyomi, vice president of the Slovakian Hungarian Coalition Party. *Blikk*, August 4, 1999)

The news is denied by the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior and the Foreign Ministry. as well as Aladár Horváth, head of the Roma Civil Rights Foundation.

"If Pitter names the organisation that he is accusing, we will be in a position to say something in merit." (Aladár Horváth, *Blikk*, August 4)

OCTOBER 1999

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán pays an official visit to Canada.

"The danger of Canada reintroducing obligatory visas against Hungary has been averted. [...] Canada has accepted the Hungarian proposal that witnesses designated by Hungary and accepted by Canada should be called to Canada to bear testimony. These witnesses bore testimony before the authorities which decide on the immigration applications of the Roma [...] The number of Hungarian Roma arriving in Canada has fallen well below the tolerance threshold. ...it is no longer a problem which would necessitate diplomatic action. No ethnic group in Hungary has a reason to leave Hungary and ask for political asylum anywhere else." (Viktor Orbán, *Magyar Hírlap*, October 29, 1999)

This was followed by a six-month silence in reports in the Hungarian press on Roma emigration. The turn came with the 'Zámoly affair'.

MAY 2000

The Zámoly Roma are unwilling to move back to their village, being afraid of being assaulted. They are asking for twenty million HUF in exchange for their newly built houses and each family is demanding three million HUF in compensation for their 'three-year ordeal'. They have set a deadline for their demands on the National Gypsy Self-Government, which expires at the end of this month. If their demands are not met, they will emigrate to Canada.

Dezső Csete, mayor of Csór, declares, at several fora, that he is prepared to do anything to make the Zámoly Roma leave the village.

Several reports are published on families who emigrated to Canada but were disappointed by what they found there and returned to Hungary (many of them ended up homeless).

JUNE 2000

The National Gypsy Self-Government announces its readiness to sell the houses in Zámoly.

Canada does not introduce the compulsory visa system but Canadian authorities express their concern about the fact that in the past two years a hundred persons as an average applied for refugee status every month.

JULY 2000

Headed by József Krasznai, Roma families leave the country on July 23. They go to Strasbourg where they submit an application at the European Court of Human Rights and ask for asylum in France.

The early morning television programme *Nap-kelte* broadcasts an old report (first aired in 1999) on the homicide case in Zámoly.

Tosó Doncsev, head of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities speaks disapprovingly about the Zámoly emigration case.

> "It has been stated by the European Union that Hungary is a country ruled by law, where human rights are secured and no one is persecuted by government and state organs and that these institutions do their utmost to examine breaches of the law." (Tosó Doncsev, *Magyar Hírlap*, July 25, 2000)

The Party of Hungarian Truth and Life voices the responsibility of "certain forces in the Hungarian Socialist Party and the press which toes their line". According to István Csurka, the affair of the Zámoly Roma is "an utterly concocted hocus-pocus against the state and the government around the camp-fire of Roma rights". (*Népszabadság*, July 27, 2000)

AUGUST 2000

Péter Harrach, Minister of Social and Family Affairs denounces the Zámoly Roma at an ecumenical meeting in Somlóhegy on August 5.

> "To bring the state and the nation into disrepute, some people go abroad and not only claim compensation but also voice untrue accusations against the country and the government. They have done less for themselves than the country has done for them. After that they start making demands and now making threats. If this can be done, and if some people even find this laudable, then there is something fundamentally wrong about our values." (Quoted by *Magyar Nemzet*, August 8, 2000)

After the statement the minister becomes the target of repeated criticisms. Some Roma associations call for his resignation.

In his regular early Wednesday radio interview Viktor Orbán stands up for Peter Harrach.

"I think the Roma self-government has the right to approve or disapprove of an official statement or declaration, but even they cannot change reality. And the opinion of the Minister was based on facts, and I think talking about the facts is important whatever the topic is [...] In 2000 4,8 billion HUF are spent by the government and the people to deal with the Roma question [...] That is to say, we are spending that amount of money to assist the social integration of Roma. [...] It is through education and work that the Roma can rise. My advice to our Roma countrymen who live in Hungary is just this: try to learn and work as much as you can. ... there is not a single child any more who is of Roma descent and is prevented from studying by social disadvantage." (Interview with the Prime Minister, Radio Kossuth, *Reggeli krónika*, August 9, 2000)

Twenty-two Roma in the town of Ózd decide that they will emigrate to Strasbourg. They are being manipulated from the background, says Aladár Kótai, head of the local minority self-government. József Krasznai speaks of a political purpose:

"By arranging for the massive emigration of the Roma I want to put pressure on the Orbán government so that it will change its policy which is hard on the poor." (*Népszabadság*, August 3, 2000)

Szonda-Poll conducts a telephone survey on a 500-person representative sample with the following results: 77% of those asked know the problem of the Zámoly Roma with which they sought help in Strasbourg and 72,5% questioned the justifiability of their steps. 73,5% of those who had a firm opinion thought the Roma were not at a disadvantage (*Világgazdaság*, August 3, 2000).

József Krasznai is suspected of embezzlement and reported to the police by Krisztián Lakatos, president of the Székesfehérvár Gypsy Minority Self-Government.

Representative of the Ózd Roma ask for information at the French Embassy.

The French Embassy announces its intention to support PHARE projects directed at the improvement of the living conditions of Roma as much as it can.

Three representatives of the Ózd Gypsy Minority Self-Government travel to Strasbourg to gather information about possibilities of emigration. On their return they emphatically discourage everyone from taking the route of emigration and express their opinion that the problem of the gypsies must be remedied at home.

According to non-official sources the 150 Roma of Ózd are preparing to go to Strasbourg despite the local minority self-government's attempts to dissuade them. Travel arrangements are being made by a man resident in Ózd, who is in contact with József Krasznai. Krasznai says the number of Ózd Roma preparing to leave the country reaches 300.

Founded in April, the Roma Civil Rights Group asks the Roma not to follow the Zámoly example. They make several official statements according to which the affair has been purposefully manipulated toward hysteria.

Respectable personalities from advocacy organisations and public life say the emigration is justified. According to their official statement the Roma are fleeing from racial persecution and they have the right to leave the country and complain of the Hungarian state at international fora.

"It is racism that brings the country into disrepute, rather than those who defend themselves against it." (Aladár Horváth, Roma Civil Rights Foundation, *Népszabadság*, August 7, 2000)

"The possibility of a massive exodus cannot be excluded." (Aladár Horváth, Roma civil Rights Foundation, *Népszabadság*, August 9, 2000)

The police investigation of the Zámoly homicide case ends with a proposal for accusation.

Csaba Hende, state secretary of the Ministry of Justice expresses his sympathy with the relatives of the 21-year-old victim of the homicide in Zámoly" in a press statement. (*Népszabadság*, August 15, 2000)

Seven adults and eight children in Körmend are reported to intend to emigrate and to ask the local authority to pay their travel expenses. The mayor of Körmend says the town has no funds for such purposes and adds that the families concerned have not been paying the rent of their local government flats regularly. Meanwhile local businessmen collect signatures in support of a petition urging the local government to "make order among the gypsies". The letter claims that a handful of families engaging in criminal activities frighten tourists away (*Vas Népe*, August 25, 2000).

József Krasznai turns to Jacques Chirac for help, asking him to support the Zámoly Roma's application for refugee status.

The state secretary of the Ministry of Justice frequently voices his opinion on the Zámoly Roma's application in Strasbourg.

"It is not a good thing to be a Roma in Hungary, just as it is not a good thing to be ill, old or poor. This, however, does not mean that anyone in Hungary is persecuting the gypsies just because they are gypsies. All such claims are simply false. And the application submitted by the Zámoly Roma contains such an allegation. [...] There is another claim there, which I deny most firmly: the claim that the government cannot and does not want to prevent the persecution of Roma. This claim is not only injurious to the reputation of the government, but it also potentially undermines the good reputation of the entire country." (Csaba Hende, quoted in *Dunaújvárosi Hírlap*, August 23, 2000)

Csaba Hende makes a similar statement in early August. On August 15, he sends a press statement to MTI (The Hungarian News Agency) which is taken over by almost all newspapers. The statements repeatedly feature the phrases "the Zámoly Roma are voicing unjust accusations", "the application of the Roma contains misrepresentations of facts", "they are purposefully undermining the country's reputation".

The parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe entrusts Csaba Tabajdi with preparing the report on the situation of Roma in Europe.

SEPTEMBER 2000

Marie Helene Gilling, representative in the Council of Europe and vice mayor of Strasbourg interpellates in the European Parliament:

"The affair of the Zámoly Roma, the discrimination affecting gypsies who live in East and Central European countries shows clearly indicates that countries awaiting accession to the European Union are having great difficulty in complying with the minority and human rights requirements determined by the fifteen member states." (Marie Helene Gilling, quoted in *Népszabadság*, September 6, 2000)

The trial of the Zámoly homicide begins with the hearing of the accused at the Fejér County court on October 30.

NOVEMBER 2000

The trial of the Zámoly homicide case is adjourned for an indefinite period.

Further families, from the town of Mohács, leave for Canada. József Krasznai invites Ózd families who are awaiting eviction to a meeting in the Bükk Community Centre in Ózd. Although the room has been reserved in advance, the participants are not allowed to enter.

On November 21, the French Embassy hosts a meeting between the ambassadors of EU member states with the purpose of providing them with information about the situation of gypsies.

DECEMBER 2000

At the public prosecutor's proposal, Fejér County Court requests France to extradite two Roma persons staying in Strasbourg.

Further Roma families (15 adults and 18 children) from Battonya, Veszprém, and Mosonmagyaróvár leave for the Netherlands.

The emigrants have been cheated, Minister of Justice Ibolya Dávid claims

It is rumoured that some of the families who have applied for asylum in Strasbourg have recently returned to Hungary to collect the child benefits due from the local authority and the government.

"The Roma are returning to Zámoly for their social benefits from Strasbourg." (Information from TV1 newsreel quoted by *Magyar Nemzet*, December 16, 2000)

Data released by the Canadian immigration office reveal that the number of Hungarian Roma emigrating to Canada has again increased in the past four months (290 persons in November).

No Hungarian citizen is going to be given refugee status abroad, Csaba Hende says (*Magyar Nemzet*, December 19, 2000).

Several intellectuals, Roma and non-Roma, issue a statement protesting against János Báthory's appointment to the post of head of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities Office.

János Báthory receives his appointment on December 20.

It is the favourable conditions offered by the Canadian system of government support rather than persecution in Hungary that motivates the Roma to emigrate, Csaba Hende says (*Népszava*, December 19, 2000).

JANUARY 2001

Eight families in Veszprém and one in Somlóvásárhely (sixty persons or so) decide to emigrate at the end of the month.

The prefecture in Strasbourg reveals that a special interrogator would be appointed to decide on the request for extraditing the two Zámoly Roma, if the French authorities were to receive an international search and arrest warrant.

The suit between Zámoly and the Roma commences: the six Roma families, who have meanwhile applied for refugee status in Strasbourg, initiate legal action against the Zámoly authority for the unlawful demolition of their houses in 1997.

"Roma emigration is seriously endangering our accession to the European Union." (János Báthory, head of the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities, quoted in *Új Dunántúli Napló*, January 5, 2001)

"Roma leave for economic and social reasons, but once they are abroad it is simpler to refer to racial persecution. The careful planning behind these organised departures makes one suspect some powerful backstage actors, domestic or foreign, which contribute even financially to the migration of the Roma." (Béla Osztojkán, vice president of the National Gypsy Self-Government quoted in *Világgazdaság*, January 5, 2001)

The war of public statements surrounding the Roma's return to collect their social security benefits continues.

"The Roma cannot have come home to collect their benefits because that would mean losing their entitlement to political asylum." (József Krasznai, *Magyar Hírlap*, January 5, 2001).

Népszabadság reports that after an examination which lasted half a year OFPRA[1] has granted asylum to a few Zámoly Roma who are presently staying in Strasbourg (*Népszabadság*, January 6, 2001).

"The Hungarian state safeguards the principles of security in the law and protection by the law for all its citizens alike. Hungary is a democratic state ruled by law. No one has ever doubted that." (Csaba Hende, *Népszabadság*, January 8, 2001)

The Prime Minister's Office could not confirm the claim that a few of the Zámoly Roma have been given asylum.

[1] Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides.

Ibolya Krasznai, József Krasznai's sister dies.

There is no persecution of Roma in our country and the security of the Zámoly Roma was not endangered, János Báthory says.

> "It is a disadvantage to everyone if the Roma are granted political asylum in France. With their decision, the French may set off a wave of migration, and such a wave is not favourable for our country's image abroad." (János Báthory, quoted in *Népszava*, January 8, 2001)

The political state secretary of the Ministry of Justice finds the response of the Zámoly Roma poorly justified in view of the fact that they turned directly to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg without taking recourse to legal remedies available at home. Csaba Hende tells MTI the ministry of Justice will decide shortly whether to request competent French authorities to extradite the Roma against whom Fejér County court has recently issued an arrest warrant as part of criminal proceedings in the Zámoly homicide case.

On January 9, the French Refugee authority denies the Hungarian news report according to which decision on the application of the Zámoly Roma who arrived in Strasbourg in July has been made.

> "Even if particular acts in themselves do not qualify as persecution, their joint effect may make an application for asylum justified. Even if discrimination is not grave but frequent, it may add up to persecution." (Dominique Forget, spokesman for the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board to the Roma Press Centre, quoted by *Népszava*, January 10, 2001)

The Ministry of Justice launches an investigation to decide whether it is lawful for the families who have gone to Strasbourg to collect their social security benefits and child benefits by proxies.

Erika Schlager, legal advisor to the board of the US congress dealing with European security and cooperation, an expert on Roma, draws attention to the fact that in Hungary Roma children are often transferred to special schools and are thus isolated, even in cases where the children concerned are far from being mentally disabled.

Schlager quotes a statement made by the mayor of Csór as a verbal manifestation of prejudice, according to which "the Zámoly Roma have no place among human beings". She also comments on a statement made by Viktor Orbán in which the prime minister argued for 'harder work' in connection with the Roma asylum applicants. (*Népszava*, January 26, 2001).

FEBRUARY 2001

As a result of a revision of the child protection and regular social benefit system, Zámoly local authorities stop remitting benefits to the Roma families.

Attila Monostory proposes that the court should procure Ibolya Krasznai's death certificate (*Napló*, February 8, 2000).

The news sources of *Népszabadság* uphold their claim that the French government intends to accord refugee status and long-term residence permits to the Zámoly families (*Népszabadság*, February 20, 2001).

> "The Roma question can be settled only if the gypsy community resists internal and external influences and stops wanting to segregate within the society." (Ferenc Mádl, president of the republic, letter to the conference "The Future of Gypsies in Hungary" quoted in *Magyar Nemzet*, February 20, 2001)

Melinda Lakatos, one of the Zámoly emigrants, returns with her children. As a result of some lobbying by the Office of National and Ethnic Minorities she is given a food aid package worth 50.000 HUF.

Csaba Hende promises to supply the Zámoly Roma with a mobile phone on their return from Strasbourg so that they can call the storm troops of county police in case they are attacked.

MARCH 2001

Supported by two left-wing French MPs, József Krasznai and Jenő Zsigó give a press conference in the Bourbon Palace in Paris. The leaders of the Ózd Gypsy Minority Self-Government turn up unexpectedly but they are not allowed to enter.

> "There is nothing extraordinary about the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should cover the travel expenses of three Roma leaders of Ózd." (Gábor Horváth, foreign affairs spokesman, quoted in *Magyar Hírlap*, March 5, 2001)

Jane's Intelligence, a British journal on defence policy reports that the emigration of the Zámoly Roma is a result of a series of operative actions organised by the Russian secret service. The scandal set off by the news keeps the interest of politicians active for the rest of the month.

- Ervin Demeter, a minister without portfolio in charge of secret services does not wish to comment on the information published by *Jane's Intelligence*.
- Russian diplomatic sources find it silly to suppose that the Roma were instigated by KGB's successor organisation to leave Hungary.
- *Jane's Intelligence* denies having received the information from the Hungarian Secret Service (*Magyar Nemzet*, March 6, 2001).
- Peter Hack (Alliance of Free Democrats) initiates summoning the special session of the national security board of Parliament and hearing Ervin Demeter. At the session Ervin Demeter maintains his earlier position of neither confirming, nor denying the information published in the British press.
- The editor-in-chief of *Jane's Intelligence* says the Zámoly Roma are supported by the French Communist Party which had close ties with KGB in the not so distant past.

• Fejér County Court dismisses the suit brought by the Zámoly Roma against the Zámoly local authority. The appealable decision at first instance is that the Roma are not entitled to compensation.

"Officials in the European Union find the Hungarian system of local minority self-governments unique and worth following, and recognise the government's efforts: the present government provides three times as much concern and funds as the previous ones to help the Roma catch up with the rest of society." (Ibolya Dávid, Minister of Justice, *Népszabadság*, March 8, 2001)

On March 7, eight Zámoly Roma are granted asylum (*Magyar Hirlap*, March 8, 2001). "Three, not eight, Zámoly Roma were granted asylum" – Gábor Horváth has been informed unofficially from Strasbourg. The foreign affairs spokesman says three application have been rejected (*Sláger Rádió*, March 8, 2001)

"In giving refugee status to three Roma from Zámoly the French authorities were not passing judgement on minority policy of the Hungarian Government." (Gábor Horváth foreign affairs spokesman, *Info Rádió*, March 9, 2001)

A group of Hungarian intellectuals write a letter to French prime minister Lionel Jospin thanking him for the favourable decision on the Zámoly Roma's application.

Melinda Lakatos, who returned to Hungary in the first days of the month with her three children, returns to Strasbourg.

"The government finds the decision of the French organisation, a supposedly independent organisation, unfair and unjust. [...] The government finds this decision potentially dangerous, as it amplify anti-Roma sentiments in Hungary." (Gábor Borókay, government spokesman, *Dunaújvárosi Hirlap*, March 14, 2001)

Two other Zámoly Roma are granted refugee status.

Prime minister Viktor Orbán says it is out of place to speak of 'asylum' with respect to the Zámoly Roma.

"Hungary stands the test of comparison with any of the European Union member states in terms of human rights and democracy. While several countries have lost human lives as a result of violations of ethnic human rights, this has never happened in Hungary." (Viktor Orbán, *Magyar Demokrata*, March 22, 2001)

Problems of interpretation have arisen between the French authorities and the Hungarian government. The point being disputed is whether the asylum granted to the Zámoly Roma is of a political nature.

An application for refugee status submitted by a family of five is rejected in Strasbourg. According to information acquired by the press, the reason for the rejection is the lack of sufficient proof that they were staying in Zámoly during the time concerned, the press comments.

By March 15, 15 of the Zámoly group have received refugee status.

The Solidarity Committee of Strasbourg writes a letter thanking for the support shown by those signing the letter sent to Lionel Jospin early in the month.

> "Ever since the Roma of Zámoly arrived in Strasbourg, we have been making efforts to prevent their cause from being used against either Hungary or its European integration. From the first moment, we have understood the affair as an act of solidarity with all those who do not accept discrimination." (Letter by Georges Federmann, quoted in *Magyar Hírlap*, March 22, 2001)

The Committee for Historical Redress issues a statement dissociating itself from the conduct of the "narrow circle of militant intellectuals and politicians affiliated with the Left". The CHR finds the letter of sympathy with the Zámoly Roma an act designed to instigate scandal and a crusade against the government (*Magyar Nemzet*, March 23, 2001).

Five gypsy families in Komló are preparing to leave for Strasbourg at the end of the month.

APRIL 2001

Seventy Hungarian citizens apply for asylum within four days (March 31–April 3). Canada is planning to reintroduce the compulsory visa system.

Roma in Pécsvárad are making arrangements for their emigration.

The National Gypsy Self-Government submits a scheme to the minister of justice in connection with the problem of those Roma who are planning to return from abroad. Flórián Farkas, president of the organisation thinks many would return if they received help at home.

Ten gypsy families in Baranya county decide to leave Hungary for good.

Lionel Jospin's chief of staff writes a letter to Hungarian intellectuals thanking them for their letter to the French prime minister. He writes that Jospin was greatly impressed by the ideas expressed in the letter.

Minister of the interior Sándor Pintér sees no reason to expect the reintroduction of the compulsory visa system between Hungary and Canada. He invites Canadian refugee experts to Hungary, expecting that the practice of processing asylum applications will change after the visit.

10-15 families in Tiszapalkonya are reported to have expressed their wish to emigrate.

A witness in the Zámoly homicide case changes his testimony. Now he is certain that Krisztián Krasznai was also delivering blows at Ferenc Csete. He thought he could recognise two women on a video recording made in Strasbourg, who were on the spot of the murder.

Three further families (six adults and nine children) are granted refugee status.

Edit Herczog and Csaba Tabajdi deny having offered during their visit in Strasbourg in September 2000, money to the Zámoly Roma if they returned to Hungary. Tabajdi describes Krasznai as a 'notorious liar' (*Magyar Hírlap*, April 24, 2001).

The Batthyányi Circle of Professors write a letter to French prime minister Lionel Jospin expounding their opinion that the letter of the Hungarian intellectuals written to him in March brings Hungary into unfounded disrepute and enhances tension in Hungarian society.

The Transylvanian Alliance, Hunyadi Alliance, Kárpátalja Alliance, the Alliance of Political Prisoners and Rákóczi Alliance publish an open letter in which they dissociate themselves from 'the letter of the intellectuals' (*Magyar Demokrata*, April 26, 2001).

The two women whose extradition was sought two months ago by the ministry of Justice are given refugee status.

Melinda Lakatos does not receive refugee status. OFPRA justify its decision by questioning the well-foundedness of an application for asylum if meanwhile the applicant returns to the place where he or she claims to be exposed to persecution.

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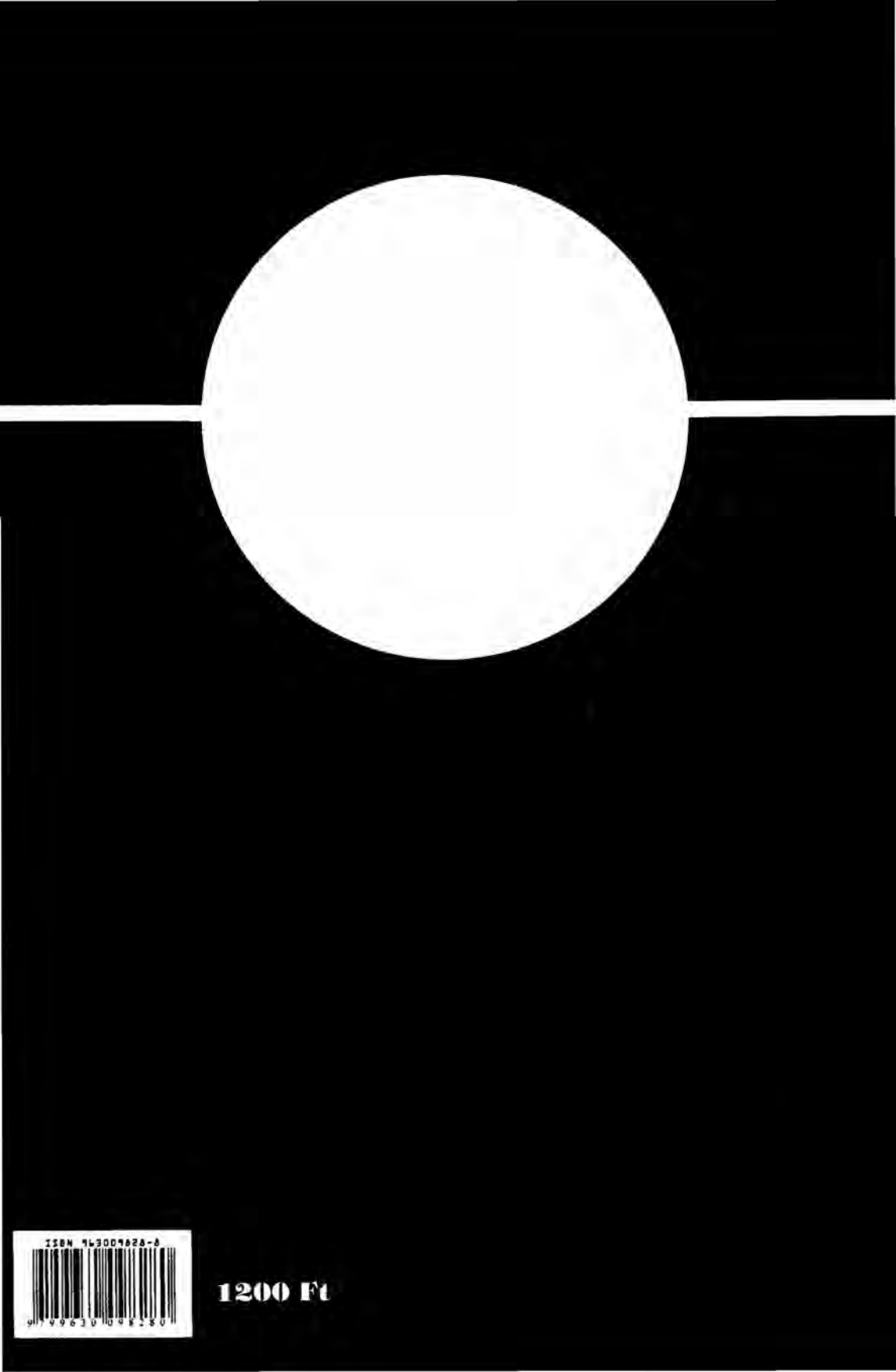
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