The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future*

DIMITRINA PETROVA

Who are the Roma? An Identity in the Making

UNTIL the early 1990s, few people knew the meaning of the term "Roma," but almost everybody had opinions about the "Gypsies." In the last years, however, the term "Roma," which is the ethnocultural self-appellation of many of those perceived by outsiders as "Gypsies," has come to dominate the official political discourse, at least in Europe, and has acquired the legitimacy of political correctness. Not all so-called Gypsies in the world today recognize themselves as Roma, and it is difficult to predict whether a broader identity will be constituted in the future to encompass the non-Roma "Gypsies." But at present, the political construction of the Roma identity has reached a stage at which the outsider identifications, such as Gypsy and Tsigane, terms still preferred in much of the historical, anthropological, and ethnographic literature, are considered undesirable due to the huge baggage of prejudice they carry.

Groups externally identified as Gypsies but not necessarily considering themselves as ethnic Roma include the Jevgjit in Albania; the Ashlkalija and Egyptians in Kosovo and Macedonia; the Travelers in Britain and Ireland; and the Rudari and Beyashi in Hungary, Romania, and other countries. The Sinti, who live in many

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European countries, particularly Germany, are sometimes subsumed under the Roma category (e.g., by Hancock, 2002: 34), and sometimes set apart from Roma (e.g., Marushiakova and Popov, 2003). Speaking the Romani language (Romanes) is not a necessary identity characteristic either: some communities that consider themselves Roma have actually lost the Romani language (the majority of today's Roma in Hungary, for example).

In the Romani language, the word "Roma" means "people" in the plural masculine gender, with a connotation of "us" as opposed to "them." Outsiders are referred to by the general term *gadje* (also a masculine noun in the plural). It is my impression that calling all "others" by one name, "gadje," is a strikingly frequent conversational practice when Roma speak with Roma. This frequent reference to a generalized "other" is generally not found in any other insider ethnic discourse. This certainly reflects a high degree of "us/them" opposition that has been historically reinforced by centuries of internalized oppression and isolation.

At first glance, it is quite amazing and even exceptional that over centuries of exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, and in some regions slavery and forced assimilation, the Gypsy groups have preserved strong elements of a common ethnocultural self-consciousness, which serves as one of the bases for the continuing construction of the Romani identity. In the course of one millennium, many ethnic identities in Europe have vanished without a trace. But in the Gypsy case, several factors have created a synergy to preserve the sense of belonging together. These include late arrival in a continent already populated by settled communities, the high degree of difference from European culture and society, and the ensuing structural social and political weakness of the Roma in European history. Attitudes and practices that reproduce the pariah status of the Gypsies are deeply entrenched anti-Gypsism and the systematic abuse of their human rights in the last few centuries, including widespread persecution and racial discrimination. These same factors can be described as the root

causes of both anti-Gypsism and the survival of the Roma as one single—but not yet internally homogeneous—cultural identity.

It is also important to emphasize that, following the end of communism in Central and Eastern European societies (where the largest numbers of Roma are concentrated), new political dynamics are at work. In postcommunist countries we have witnessed the rise of racially based discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization of the Roma at the same time that the opposite forces of an advancing Roma rights movement are taking shape. These parallel tendencies undoubtedly fuel the construction and consolidation of a Romani ethnic identity and, more recently, of a "nonterritorial Roma nation" (Project on Ethnic Relations, 2001).

While the Romani ethnic identity is the basis of present-day emancipatory mobilization, it is difficult to say to what extent a shared consciousness of belonging together can be ascribed to the larger group of communities labeled by the external world as Gypsies. For example, in Albania, while the historic relatedness of the Jevgjit to the Roma is a subject of scholarly debate, the members of these two groups, seen indiscriminately as Gypsies by the surrounding majority, in fact consider themselves separate peoples and reveal negative attitudes toward one another. Similarly, in Kosovo, the Ashkalija reject an association with the Roma; but because they are perceived as Gypsies by the nationalizing Albanian majority, they were subjected to the same ugly ethnic cleansing as the Roma in the aftermath of the 1999 NATO war against Yugoslavia and the mass return of the Kosovo Albanian refugees to their homeland. In the countries of the former Soviet Union, certain groups are perceived as Gypsies (Tsygane in Russian) who are not Roma. Apart from the more established Ruska Roma and the other Romani groups who have been in the Russian empire lands for several centuries, there are also small groups of Sinti who moved eastward from Germany through Poland at the beginning of the twentieth century; Armenian-speaking Gypsies called Bosha who identify as Lomavtic; Asian Gypsies known as Karachi from the Caucasus (mainly Azerbaijan); Central Asian Gypsies

called Lyuli (who also use the appellation Mugat) found in Tajikistan but who have intensely migrated to the large Russian cities in the last decade. In the complex history and geography of Gypsy identities, still in flux on the territory of the former Soviet Union, the Ruska Roma make up only one part—albeit the largest—of the Gypsy groups, connected by a common historical and cultural legacy (for detailed description, see Marushiakova and Popov, 2003; Demeter et al., 2000: 87-114).

Leaving aside the non-Roma Gypsies, the Roma themselves do not (yet) make up a homogeneous ethnic group. Rather, the Roma today are a continuum of more or less related subgroups with complex, flexible, and multilevel identities, with sometimes strangely overlapping and confusing subgroup names. But in the last decade, as was noted, we have been witnessing a process that has seen the historic and political consolidation of a unifying Romani identity so that the name "Roma" has now become preferred by most international and national organizations dealing with various aspects of the "Roma problem."[1]

The Abracadabra of Romani Statistics

It is widely accepted that reliable demographic and social statistics on the Roma are nonexistent. This is evident also in the European Roma Rights Center compilation on absolute numbers of Roma in European countries (see table 1). Adding numbers regarding the Americas, the Middle East, and the rest of the world would render an even more complicated picture. The reason for this can be traced to the Roma and government authorities, both of whom have found it undesirable to collect Roma-related statistics. Roma have little reason to trust gadje with notebooks and questionnaires visiting their ghettos. Authorities and the mainstream media have been ambivalent at best: they have been willing to publicize police data about the allegedly high proportion of Roma crime, but not about the high proportion of child mor-

tality, illiteracy, or unemployment. At present, Roma-related statistics are trapped in a set of legal and policy problems, including data protection laws, constitutional rights to choose freely one's ethnic identity, and the needs of ethnically coded disaggregated data for anti-discrimination agendas (for comprehensive country reports regarding race statistics, see Krizsan, 2001).

It should be noted that Roma in some countries are reluctant to reveal their identity. Of the countries with large Romani populations, Bulgaria is an example of a country in which the gap between census data and estimates is relatively small: estimates are only about double the census data. The Romani community was placed at about 371,000 people (4.7 percent of the general population) by the 2001 census, while most scholars believe that the real number is about twice that figure.[2] In contrast, the Czech Roma present a real statistical puzzle. While both government and independent sources estimate that approximately a quarter of a million Roma live in the country, the most recent (2001) census gave the number as 11,716, several times lower than the figure produced by the official census 10 years earlier.

Clues from History: The Gypsy "Invasion" in Europe

When the Romani migrated out of India is not well established. Some authors zero in on the eleventh century, while others emphasize that we are dealing with a long and complex historic process of multiple migrations by different Indian groups leaving their homeland for different reasons at different times between the seventh and thirteenth centuries. Different hypotheses have also been offered about the social status or caste in which the migrants belonged before their exodus. According to German historian Heinrich Grellmann, one of the founders of Gypsy/Romani studies in eighteenth century, the ancestors of the contemporary Roma were part of the Shudra, the lowest caste. But others oppose the low-caste ancestors theory and find it more

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF ROMA, BY COUNTRY

Country	Total population	Official number	Estimate
Albania	3,549,841	1,261	90,000-100,000
Austria	8,150,835	95	20,000-25,000
Belarus	10,350,194	11,283	10,000-15,000
Belgium	10,258,762	N/A	10,000-15,000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3,922,205	9,092	40,000-50,000
Bulgaria	7,928,901	370,908*	700,000-800,000
Croatia	4,334,142	6,695**	30,000-40,000
Cyprus	762,887	N/A	500-1000
Czech Rep.	10,264,212	11,716*	250,000-300,000
Denmark	5,352,815	N/A	1,500-2,000
Estonia	1,423,316	N/A	1000-1500
Finland	5,194,901	10,000	7,000-10,000
France	59,551,227	N/A	280,000-340,000
Germany	83,029,536	50,000-70,000	10,000-130,000
Greece	10,623,835	150,000-300,000	160,000-200,000
Hungary	10,174,853	190,046	550,000-600,000
Ireland	3,840,838	10,891	22,000-28,000
Italy	57,679,825	130,000	90,000-110,000
Latvia	2,385,231	7,955	2,000-3,500
Lithuania	3,610,535	N/A	3,000-4,000
Luxembourg	442,972	N/A	100-150
Macedonia	2,046,209	43,900	220,000-260,000
Moldavia	4,431,570	11,600	20,000-25,000
Netherlands	16,171,520	20,000	35,000-40,000
Norway	4,525,000	356	500-1000
Poland	38,633,912	25,000-30,000	50,000-60,000
Portugal	10,084,245	44,600	45,000-50,000
Romania	21,698,181	535,250	1,800,000-2,500,000
Russia	145,470,197	152,939	400,000
Serbia and Montenegro	10,677,290	143,519**	400,000-450,000
Slovakia	5,379,455	89,920	480,000-520,000
Slovenia	1,930,132	2,293	8,000-10,000
Spain	40,037,995	325,000-450,000	700,000-800,000
Sweden	8,875,053	20,000	15,000-20,000
Switzerland	7,283,274	N/A	30,000-35,000

TABLE 1, CONTINUED

Turkey	66,493,970	N/A	300,000-500,000
Ukraine	48,760,474	47,914	50,000-60,000
United Kingdom	59,778,002	90,000	90,000-120,000
Total	795,101,136	2,281,577-2,581,577	6,105,600-8,625,150

Sources: The national statistical bureaus of the countries included that were consulted are: *CIA World Factbook* (Washington, D.C.); the European Union "Regular Reports of the Candidate Countries for Membership in the European Union"; government reports provided to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; government reports provided to the Council of Europe's Committee on the Framework Convention; United States Census Bureau.
Notes: In some cases, data provided is from preliminary census results. "N/A" indicates official data is not available. Some countries have provided official estimates (see for example Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Moldova, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom). The source of the column "Unofficial Number of Roma" are NGO estimates provided in Liegeois and Gheorghe (1995).
* Census 2001
** Census 1991

convincing that the Roma were related to the Rajputs, tribes that conducted a long warfare against Islam and among whose present-day descendents are the Banjara in northwest India. The Banjara themselves recognize a connection to the Roma in Europe and have developed links with Romani activists in recent years (Hancock, 2002: 13).

In earlier literature it had been accepted that the first mention in Byzantium of Gypsies, under the name *atsinganoi* (ατσιγγανοι) is from 1054, in which they are described as sorcerers and evildoers who visited the Emperor Constantine IX Monomachus (Soulis, 1961: 145), poisoning the wild animals that were entering the emperor's gardens by using magic. The emperor then invited them to do the same with his favorite dog, but a Christian saint intervened and their magic did not work. They were chased from

the royal palace and left in disgrace. Not all authors today, agree that the reference here is actually to Roma: according to some, a heretic sect with the name atsinganoi existed between the eighth and eleventh centuries and its name passed erroneously to the Roma, who arrived in Byzantine lands most probably in the thirteenth century (Demeter et al., 2000: 16; Hancock, 2002: 1). Others date the arrival of the Roma in Byzantine domains several centuries earlier, accepting that atsinganoi had always designated the Gypsy immigrants in Byzantium (Speck, 1997: 37-51; Marushiakova and Popov, 2000: 14-15). From the Greek atsinganoi, the Bulgarian "Tsigani," the French "Tsigane," the German "Zigeuner," the Hungarian "Cigányok," the Italian "Zingari," the Russian "Tsygane," and the Turkish "Çingene" have stuck as the external appellation of the Romani people.

The Roma remained in Byzantium for several centuries (two and a half at a minimum) before some moved on in the direction of Western Europe. It is inside the Byzantine cultural environment that the Romani identity and language were perhaps initially constituted. Many Greek words and grammatical forms were added to the Sanskrit base, and today the Greek influence is still prominent in the language. Having spent considerable amount of historic time in Byzantine lands, some Roma moved from the Balkans further on to Central and Western Europe in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, roughly the same time as the conquering Ottoman Turks. During Ottoman rule, much of the population of Albania and Bosnia, along with other peoples in other parts of the Balkans, including Roma, converted to Islam. Research has established that the Ottoman policy toward the Roma was in general more tolerant than Western European treatment during the same time (that is, the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) (see Marushiakova and Popov, 2000: 56).

By 1417, Roma had already reached parts of Western Europe. The possible reasons for this movement westward include the general societal crisis of the Byzantine Empire under the pressure of the Ottoman Turks, and the demographic rise of the Romani

communities; because they were nomadic or seminomadic service communities occupying a certain niche in the settled economy, they began to interfere with each other's area of functioning and thus needed new territories in order to maintain their sources of income.

The history of the Roma arriving and spreading in Central and Western Europe after 1417 is well documented, despite some remaining mysteries.[3] However, according to Demeter et al. (2000: 18), Western scholars have built their interpretation of Romani history chiefly on the basis of the westward expansion of the Roma in the fifteenth century. The simplest version of this narrative is that Roma were initially welcome in Western Europe, met as noble pilgrims and provided with privileges and gifts. When the European cities began, one after another, to fall victim to Gypsy crime, anti-Gypsy laws were gradually introduced throughout Western Europe, which led to four centuries of official persecution.

> It would seem that this period has long been thoroughly researched, but it is precisely its wrong interpretation that caused all further errors. It is striking that no one asked the main question: What type of Gypsies left for Western Europe in the early fifteenth century? If this most important question had been at least articulated, current tsiganology would look different. Moreover, it has been taken for granted that these were ordinary tabors. The core of our theory is the view that the tabors that rode off in the so-called "great march" were untypical—a conglomerate of persons with a propensity for adventure (Demeter et al., 2000: 18).

It is well established that the Roma in Byzantium during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries were laborers—artisans, craftsmen, metal workers, artists. European documents from the first decades of the Roma arrival, however, contain no evidence of productive occupations and present Romani livelihood as based only

on begging, robbery, deceit, and fortune-telling and do not mention such typical Romani professions as animal drill or blacksmithing. The extensively documented criminal activity of the Roma in Central and Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries thus must have been the catalyst of the lasting image of the Roma as parasitic nomads, fraudulent fortune-tellers, incapable of productive work, abusing the hospitality of those who provide them with shelter and food, unreliable, and, of course, and most significantly, remorseless thieves.

It is also well documented that, riding throughout the European West, the Roma spread a bizarre story to account for their appearance. They usually presented themselves as pilgrims from "Little Egypt," sentenced by the pope to seven years of wandering as punishment for betraying the Christian faith following an alleged Muslim conquest. The pope had allegedly also ordered all bishops and abbots to pay a certain amount of money to them and provide shelter and other necessities (Clébert, 1961: 55-57). It seems that fifteenth-century Roma were trying to make use of the geographic ignorance and religious zeal of Catholic Europe, thus ensuring safe passage for their tabors. For a number of decades and despite the growing incidence of complaints against them, they were, overall, successful in spreading the myth of religious expiation.

A presence of nomadic groups from the enigmatic "Little Egypt" is noted in dozens of medieval history sources: in the southern Czech lands in 1411, Basel and Hessen in 1414, Zurich in 1418, Rome in 1422, Augsburg in 1424, Paris in 1427, Barcelona in 1447. In Rome the group led by one Andreas obtained or forged a papal safe-conduct—much more useful than safe conducts issued to the Roma by mundane princes that were valid only in the lands under their jurisdiction. Ironically, "Little Egypt" outlived its usefulness and gave the Roma their condemned misnomer: from the "Egyptians," the word "Gypsy" and its derivatives, including Gitanes, Jitanos, Ijito, Gjupci, and Yiftos, entered European languages. According to one hypothesis, the

strangers were in fact referring to a really existing area, in Peloponnesus or elsewhere, called "Little Egypt," and since geography and cartography in medieval Europe were in a nascent state, this place of origin was identified with Egypt.

In any case, it is a historical fact that initially, the strange-looking pilgrims were met almost everywhere without hostility. The story of what exactly had caused their wanderings had many versions. It was even believed that they had been punished for their failure to help the Holy Family in the flight from Palestine to Egypt. Many rulers in medieval Europe issued safe conducts to various "Egyptian" chiefs and their company. Nobles and city authorities in France offered warm and sometimes generous receptions on religious grounds at first. For example, the king of France granted a safe conduct to Thomas, "count of Little Egypt of Bohemia." In this bizarre hybrid, the medieval confusion is most typical, an association with Egypt, while at the same time "Bohemian" was also gaining ground as a word designating the medieval Roma (Fraser, 1995: 92). In most places the arrival of the new tribes was soon followed by complaints of thefts, misbehavior, and fraud related to fortune-telling. In the Rhône region, the practice of paying the "Bohemians" to leave the vicinity and go elsewhere became established in the second half of the fifteenth century (Fraser, 1995: 93). Finally, after many attempts to chase away the newcomers and their repeated return to obtain alms from the faithful, Francis I in 1539 introduced severe measures throughout his kingdom against "certain unknown persons who call themselves Bohemians" wandering everywhere "under the guise of a simulated religion or of a certain penitence which they claim to be making through the world." He decreed that "henceforth none of the said companies and assemblies of the above-mentioned Bohemians may enter, pass or stay in our kingdom nor in the countries which are subject to us" (Fraser, 1995: 94).

In the Holy Roman Empire, during the reign of Emperor Maximilian I, the Imperial Diet issued three edicts (in 1497, 1498, and 1500) in which Gypsies were accused of espionage and singled

out for expulsion (Fraser, 1995: 86). The accusation of espionage is among the typical charges against the newcomers, though not so routine as those of robbery. The 1500 decree ordered the Gypsies to leave German lands by Easter, after which time it was to be no crime to take violent action against them. These decrees set the tone for further ordinances promulgated by princes, dukes, and other rulers, especially throughout the German lands, which were preoccupied with alleged espionage of the Gypsies and ordering their banishment from a growing number of principalities. Overall, these measures seem to have had little practical effect in the following decades, since new safe-conduct papers continued to appear in the hands of Romani leaders. For example, in 1512 one such safe conduct was granted by the Polish Duke Bogislav X, ruling over parts of Pomerania, to Ludwig von Rothenburg, count of "Little Egypt," to help him on his way to Gdansk together with his "zyganisch" company. The Diet issued new expulsion acts in 1544 and 1548, and in 1551 it declared any pass carried by a Gypsy to be void, and banned all such documents in the future (Fraser, 1995: 88).

Events followed similar patterns in the Swiss regions of the Holy Roman Empire. In 1471 the Tagsatzung (Diet) in Lucerne ruled that Gypsies were not to be housed or sheltered within the Swiss Confederation; in 1477 the city-state of Geneva (outside the confederation) expelled a number of "Saracens." In 1510, again at Lucerne, after complaints that they stole and were dangerous, "Zegynen" were banished from the confederation and faced the penalty of hanging if they returned. Despite this, complaints against them continued; at a Diet at Berne in 1516, instructions were given to take special care in keeping them out at the frontiers. About the same time, Geneva had also banned all "Saracens." These measures did not have much effect, for in 1525 a new banishment act had to be issued, which was then reissued two years later. Yet at a Diet in Baden in 1530, it was noted that Gypsies were wandering about everywhere. They were once again out-

lawed, but then in 1532 the question was back on the agenda, with the same rulings reinstated (Fraser, 1995: 89-90).

Persecution of the Gypsies in Spain and Portugal developed according to similar patterns. In 1499, seven years after the expulsion of the Jews, a royal decree stated that the "Egyptians" could either become sedentary and find masters within 60 days or face expulsion (Fraser, 1995: 97). Similar measures were enacted in the Low Countries and Italy. In Hungary, the Gypsies were treated with a greater degree of tolerance than was usual for the time, although a form of bondage was imposed on some of them, especially in Transylvania, where serfdom was not abolished until 1848 (Fraser, 1995: 106). Apart from their metal-working skills, the Gypsies had also begun to acquire a reputation as musicians in Hungary.

Despite examples of initial welcoming policies in England, anti-Gypsy legislation began to appear toward the end of the reign of Henry VIII. The measures extended well beyond the Gypsies to vagrancy generally, which in Tudor England was a pressing problem. "Vagabondage" had been growing for years as a result of enclosure and the break up of the old system of farming, which put thousands of agricultural workers out on the roads. Vagrants were persecuted as a matter of national priority, for, at a time when the able-bodied poor were supposed to have masters, this large and growing unemployed and landless population appeared to the dominant classes to be a major threat. The most draconian Tudor statute against vagrants was that of 1547, in the first year of Edward VI, when the prospect of a lengthy period of rule before maturity by the boy-king brought with it the possibility of factional feuds and made any increase in the size of the vagrant classes appear highly dangerous (Fraser, 1995: 114). According to a 1554 law, Gypsy nomad males had to be killed, and Elizabeth I introduced the death penalty also for anyone who befriended "Egyptians." In 1577, eight English were hanged under this law. In 1541 in Scotland an Order in Council revoked all letters of protection, safe conduct, and other privileges and

banished Gypsies from the kingdom within 30 days, on pain of death.

In Scandinavia, the Roma were first thought to be Tartars. "Tattare" remained the most widespread designation for the Roma in Sweden until the seventeenth century, when "zigenare," under the influence of German, also came into use (Fraser, 1995: 120). Anti-Gypsy laws in Sweden (1637) provided for the hanging of males. Danish tolerance also came to an end a little more than 30 years after the first appearance of the Roma. In 1536, and again in 1554, Christian III of Denmark and Norway ordered all Gypsies to leave his kingdom within three months; because the enforcement failed, his son Frederick II renewed the ban and stiffened the penalties in 1561.

Approximately 148 anti-Gypsy laws were passed in German lands between fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Mainz in 1714 passed a law mandating death for all Romani males and beating and branding of females and children (Kenrick and Grattan, 1972: 42-45).

Most authors agree that the anti-Gypsy laws were not enforced expeditiously and that it took quite a long time for repression to become the rule in the European treatment of the nomadic Gypsies. The same decrees had to be reissued many times in the course of decades before they began to be eventually implemented. In France, for example, anti-Gypsy laws banishing the "bohemians" and providing penalties if they were caught inside the kingdom were promulgated in 1504, 1510, 1522, 1534, 1539, 1561, 1606, 1647, 1660, and 1666. This delay may be the combination of a general negligence toward the Gypsies as a nonimportant and nonurgent issue, a nuisance rather than a threat to society, which resulted in a low-intensity terror that allowed the Roma to survive in Western Europe (Demeter et al., 2000: 27). Apart from the lack of high alert when it came to the Gypsies, slow and weak implementation of repressive measures in the fifteenth century was perhaps also the result of the feudal fragmentation of Europe, making law enforcement dependent exclusively on local lords.

With time, however, repression strengthened and anti-Gypsy laws began to be implemented more strictly and uniformly across the territory of sovereigns, in line with the process of nation building in modern Europe. Some of the Roma, specifically those in Germany, were forced back eastward to escape further victimization, crossing Poland and making inroads in Russia during the seventeenth century.

The root causes for the negative turn in European hospitality and the growth of repression against the Roma are not so much the harm caused by Romani crime (although this perhaps played a role) as the general change in the European cultural climate, driven by the rise of Protestantism. Anti-Gypsy laws and other persecution of the Roma are best understood in the context of the fight against vagrancy and other forms of idleness that surged in sixteenth-century Europe. Ethnicity played a lesser role. Antivagrancy moods were directed against the huge variety of traveling groups in medieval Europe that were protected by religious and mundane powers: crowds of pilgrims that had to be hosted as a matter of religious duty, minstrels, troubadours, knights, actors, and traveling indigent monks (such as the Franciscans) living off alms. The Roma became victims of this new historic tide of Protestant work ethics that denounced clerical ceremonial luxury and greed but together with it purged patience for beggars and the like, condemning all forms of life that seemed nonproductive. The process of enclosures in England also added to the antivagrancy sentiment. Even in the countries that remained Catholic, the influence of the Protestant worldview could be felt.

The Roma were swept along by this wave, since it was particularly difficult for them to adapt to the new cultural norms. Due to their distinct physical appearance, and the survival strategies consolidating their difference at the community level, it was much more difficult for them to find regular work and blend into the surrounding population. Internal kinship patterns and a distinct tradition also played a role. Additionally, integration was impeded by certain inertia in the nonproductive way of life in the first 100

years of their presence in Western Europe and especially by the real or perceived propensity for petty stealing from individual owners, which, in Europe, had long been treated as both sinful and criminal. Ultimately, the main difference that set the Roma apart was that they were the only ethnically distinct nomadic communities in a civilization that had been non-nomadic for centuries.

While Western Europe was trying with growing hostility to drive the Roma out, the Byzantine and later the Ottoman civilizations surrounded them with detached resentment but never tried to expel them. The negative stereotype similar to that in the West was in place. But the Roma were not subjected to official persecution and some categories (depending on religion, occupation, and geographic region) were even somewhat privileged in terms of taxation. Some were apparently regarded as useful service providers, especially blacksmiths and other types of metal workers. Gypsy craftsmen, for example, had privileges in Peloponnesus already in 1378 and Crete in 1386, as well as in the following centuries throughout the Ottoman Empire (Marushiakova and Popov, 2000).

Enslavement of the Roma in the vassal principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia during Ottoman rule of the Balkans lasted for almost five centuries and had a devastating effect on the prospects for societal integration. Specific forms of slave-like dependency (domestic serfs, serfs belonging to churches and monasteries, and nomadic serfs with fixed occupations) began to emerge in the fourteenth century as a result of the increasingly strict measures taken by the landlords, the aristocracy, and the monasteries to prevent their skilled and precious Romani labor force from leaving their domains (Hancock, 2002: 18). Slavery, which had deprived between 200,000 and 600,000 Roma of their civil rights, was officially abolished by the Moldavian and Wallachian parliaments in 1855 and 1856, respectively, but complete legal freedom was established only in 1864, two years after the creation of Romania as an independent unitary state. Mihail Kogalniceanu, the leader of the new nation, introduced a land

reform redistributing the land to the former serfs as free peasants.[4] During the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, large groups of Vlax Roma migrated from Romanian lands to many parts of the world, including Russia, Ukraine, and the Americas.

For the Roma who live today in countries that were once part of the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire, the forced assimilation policies of Maria Theresa, the empress of Austria, have left a lasting legacy. In late eighteenth century, speaking the Romani language and use of Romani names were criminalized and many Romani children were taken away from their parents to be socialized in non-Romani families. Because of the assimilation pressure, most Roma in Hungary today have lost their traditions and language. They have been affected in less tangible ways, too, by over two centuries of corrupting co-optation of their leaders and the inculcation of cultural attitudes that value cooperation and discourage protest.

In Russia, around the time of the 1917 October Revolution, the Roma living in the central and northern parts of the country were mainly horse-trading nomads or seminomads, renting village homes in winter but traveling during the warmer season. A relatively smaller number was settled and among them the musicians were the aristocracy. At the same time, in Ukraine and south Russia, the Roma were craftsmen (particularly blacksmiths) and many Romani women were fortune-tellers. The older Russian stereotype of Roma is dominated by the perception of Roma as dealers in horses and horse thieves; during the Soviet era this stereotype transformed, with the Roma seen as dealers in cars and car thieves.

It is not possible to fully explain the European majority stereotypes about the Roma on the basis of history alone. However, the cursory glance into the history of the Roma offered earlier suggests that the formative historical event that forged the core of the anti-Gypsy stereotype is the fifteenth-century encounter of the nomadic Roma with Western European civilization. It was in fif-

teenth-century Western Europe that the poisonous tincture of anti-Gypsism was concocted. Later developments, both in Western Europe and in other regions where Roma were seen, served to spread the primal image and to vary it with local specificities related to their predominant occupation. When the Roma completed their journey from East to West, an opposite journey began, that of the fictional Gypsies from the West to everywhere.

Anti-Gypsism: Understanding Is Not Excusing

Understanding anti-Gypsy prejudice is deceptively easy. But, even though much has been said in the literature as well as by the anti-racism movements, a strong sense of dissatisfaction remains. What is it that makes the Roma such an eternal target for the racists? Why are Roma so universally despised? Why is the negative sentiment so entrenched? Why do the Roma remain Europe's most persecuted minority, even after so much energy has been poured into eradicating anti-Gypsism? Will the Roma ever become equal members of society? Everyone who has watched Roma-related developments over the years has experienced moments of confusion and despair at the magnitude of these questions.

The single most important concept that helps explain anti-Gypsy prejudice is *weakness*. To put it simply, Roma would not have been ignored, resented, insulted, humiliated, and repressed if they had *power*. Looking at the historic experience of the Roma, and comparing the Roma with other ethnic groups, suggests that the uniqueness of the Roma consists in an extraordinary historically rooted structural weakness. Because of their late arrival in Europe and strong cultural difference, the Roma have failed to use the quintessential empowerment strategy available to other groups: building a nation-state. Inhabitants of the margins and alien to political passions, the Roma have not used the sanctioning potential of the vote, either.

The fatal combination of a strong "otherness" and a historically very late arrival in a settled (non-nomadic) Europe impeded not only state building, but also integration, assimilation, and even extermination of the Roma. Otherness was physical as well as cultural: very dark skin (it is believed that the Roma were darker when they first reached European lands), distinct non-European features (again, it is alleged that their appearance was less European seven centuries ago than it is today); "odd" clothes and language; unintelligible and inaccessible customs that seemed even more alien because the Roma preferred to keep apart from the gadje. The visible cultural difference, especially the nomadic way of life, created a bias against the moral values of the Roma. The fact that the tabor is here today and gone tomorrow does not contribute to a reputation for responsibility. The departed are ideal suspects for all kinds of crime in the settled community. At times, in northern Europe, particularly in Scandinavia, Roma were also seen as a threat to Christendom and often confused with Turks or Tartars. Their religious life, too, has never been treated by the outside world without suspicion. Their alleged involvement with magic made their religious practices, whether Christian Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, or Muslim, appear to be a hypocritical cover up for an esoteric spirituality or an irreligious cynicism.

History contains clues but they do not explain the longevity and the profoundness of anti-Gypsism. What cannot be grasped through historical interpretation can perhaps be elucidated from the point of view of the place of the Roma in the structure of twentieth-century European societies. The Roma continue to occupy a pariah place in twentieth-century and present-day European societies and remain a target for hate accumulation, as well as a perfect scapegoat.

If the key to understanding anti-Gypsism in a historic perspective is in the Weberian link between Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, the perceived Roma noninvolvement (or very weak involvement) with modern industrial and postindustrial capitalism in Western Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth cen-

turies is key to understanding the longevity of the prejudice. The Nazi extermination of the Roma during World War II was undoubtedly the greatest catastrophe in the history of this people. Nazi racist pseudoscience defined the Gypsies of mixed, impure origin as an inferior race (despite ascribing "Aryan" ancestors to those Roma who had remained uncontaminated by racial mixing). The Nazis killed between 500,000 and 1.5 million Roma, according to different authors who are contributing to the growing body of literature on the Porajmos (the somewhat controversial Romani word that is becoming established as the Romani analogue of the Shoah; see Hancock, 2002: 34-51; Lewy, 2000; Kenrick and Puxton, 1972). Space constraints preclude even beginning a discussion of this most horrible chapter in the history of the Roma. But we should emphasize that, following World War II, anti-Gypsism, very much like anti-Semitism, did not disappear from European societies. Yet the attention the Roma Porajmos received in Western society and literature in the last few decades is not commensurate with the attention given the destruction of the European Jewry. This fact itself is symptomatic: it is one of the most revealing signs of the continuing political weakness of the Roma. At the level of racist prejudice, the core of the anti-Gypsist stereotype remained more or less the same: Roma continue to be seen, even after the Nazi genocide, as parasitic elements, alien to the principle of productivity and its underlying values.

But if the destiny of the Roma in the capitalist world after World War II can be seen as a continuation of their profound incompatibility with capitalist rationalization, what was the destiny of the much larger Romani communities that lived under communism? If the Gypsies were not fit for capitalism, did they not fit into a radically different social and political system?

The Soviet government created Gypsy production cooperatives, which enabled some of the Roma, notably Kalderara, to settle in big cities. In rural areas, Gypsy cooperative farms (*kolkhozy*) were also established. Both forms of collectivization, however,

existed for a short time and disappeared toward the end of the 1930s. Only around 3 percent of the Gypsies were involved in the experiment. In the difficult postwar period, many Roma in the Soviet Union who had been already settled reverted to a nomadic lifestyle and stayed in large groups (tabors) in the suburbs of big cities. In 1956, a decree issued by the Soviet government outlawed vagrancy and ordered coercive sedentarization of the Gypsies. Measures enforcing mandatory settling of the Gypsies duly followed throughout the communist countries of Eastern Europe and were based on similar decrees. As Marushiakova and Popov explain (2003: 8), these have to date been evaluated in ideological terms. From a communist point of view, they have been described as integration into the "socialist way of life," while the West has seen them as violations of Roma human rights. In fact, the antinomadism measures mandating the inclusion of the Gypsies in the socialist labor force are better understood, at least in the Soviet Union, as recognition of the failure of preceding state policy regarding this minority. The Soviet 1956 decree made the Roma obey laws and norms that had been mandatory for everyone else in the Soviet society since the 1920s.

The Brezhnev era of economic stagnation is remembered today by the Roma in the former Soviet countries as an affluent, prosperous time. In the shortage economy of that period, people had money but there were permanent deficits of basic goods that shifted from item to item and from region to region, and deficit commodities appearing irrationally at some place immediately produced queues and speculation. This status quo was a result of the (inefficient) central planning system. It provided the highly mobile and flexible Roma with better opportunities to fill the niches of mediators and distributors in a parallel, unofficial economy of redistribution through what had been illegal commercial activities. The Roma bought in one place and sold many hundreds of miles away a variety of goods, from chewing gum to electronics smuggled from abroad. At the same time, in the non-Soviet communist camp, the Roma, though faithfully mar-

ried to a pariah image, were well on their way to occupying the lowest strata of the working class.

A paradoxical situation thus emerged during the Cold War. In Western Europe, many Roma, whose numbers were considerably lower than in the east, preserved a nomadic way of life. Roma remained more distinct in cultural terms while almost invisible politically, and had no place, at the level of public imagination, in the productive classes contributing to the community. At the same time, under communism, they were too "capitalist," often punished for "speculation" and illegal trading. Crime associated with the Roma also displaced them from the world of socialist productive labor. The Gypsies did not fit on either side of the Iron Curtain. On both sides, they were despised as parasites, but for opposite reasons regarding what constitutes a valuable contribution to society. In both worlds, they occupied social spaces not captured by the dominant discipline, whether that of capitalist enterprise or socialist labor.

In recent years, it has become fashionable to underscore the deep difference between the social and political background of Roma in Eastern as opposed to Western Europe and North America. This is why it is important here, especially when trying to understand the ubiquitous nature of the anti-Romani bias, to grasp the essential element of anti-Gypsism that Western and Eastern European public opinions have in common: the perception of the Roma's parasitic existence and, hence, the deep-seated attitude that the Gypsies are subhuman.

It can be argued (as I do elsewhere: see Petrova, 2000) that the denial of racism is gradually becoming the most typical expression of racist attitudes. "Denial of racism" is meant in the sense that a) the suffering of victims of racism, b) the existence of attitudes in oneself or society that makes this suffering possible, and c) the existence of practices and institutions of racism, are denied.

The denial of racism is a reaction to the post-World War II sanction of racism. In my view, racism's presence is denied more vehe-

mently in those cultures, which, following the Second World War, have done more to limit racism and related intolerance. Denial is a manifestation of a certain level of accomplishment in implementing a human rights and antiracism agenda in a society. In Western democratic societies, for example, most people who share racist opinions and act accordingly, would deny that they are racist, since racism is officially and culturally condemned, while tolerance, racial equality, and human rights are dominant ideological values. Thus, at present racism is rarely a self-description; increasingly, and under the influence of Western democracies and the international antiracism movement, it is becoming a label applied to groups or individuals as perceived by others. Although explicitly racist groups and parties exist, the larger part of today's racists, who hold people of certain ethnic background in contempt or hostility, at the same time oppose being described as racists. Austria's Freedom Party experienced a dramatic rise in popularity following a change of leadership in the mid-1980s, which brought the demagogic, charismatic Jörg Haider to its head and with him a newly invigorated populist, antiforeigner language, together with a renewed belittling of Austria's complicity in the racist crimes of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, most of the party members and supporters deny its racist character.

Anti-Gypsism, a powerful form of present-day racism, is also frequently manifested in the rhetoric of denial. Examples of the rhetoric of denial include:

- Arguing that race/ethnicity problems are social and economic problems: Government officials from Eastern Europe have said, in effect, that "We are not racist, and do not discriminate. We have no problem with the race or ethnicity of the Roma, but this group is economically and socially weak. The fact that its members are of the same, namely Romani ethnicity, is unimportant (irrelevant, accidental, etc.)." In this case, the government has an excuse for not dealing with race discrimination as an urgent issue;

- Posing the "equality before the law" argument: This argument lays stress on existing allegedly equal protection by the law. The claim is that "Roma are equal before the law, and therefore do not suffer discrimination in my country; anything that would favor them over others is unfair."
- Raising the "equal opportunity" (meritocratic) argument: "The members of the Roma ethnic group enjoy equal opportunities with everyone else in our society. How they use these opportunities is up to them. The fact that they do not make good use of their opportunities is not our fault. People ultimately get what they deserve."
- Blaming the victims: "The Roma must have done something wrong, if not the current generation then previous; otherwise they would not have ended up in such misery/in prison/on the street."
- Recasting race difference as mental disability: "Romani children are not ready for general public schools."
- Recasting race difference as a behavioral disorder.
- Emphasizing duties as a precondition for the enjoyment of rights: "If the Roma do not fulfill their duty X, they cannot claim their right Y."
- Engaging in denial with the "positive example" argument: "Look at those Roma who made it to the top of society, the company, etc."
- Engaging in denial by disclaimer: "Some of my best friends are Roma"; or "I am not racist, because in my building there lived a Romani family, and I had a very good relationship with them."
- Employing the romanticizing stereotype: The romantic stereotype of Roma includes elements such as musical and dancing talent, capability of passionate love and other strong emotions, spontaneity, free and spiritual character, magical relatedness to nature, ability to enjoy themselves.

Almost none of these rhetorical forms of racist denial, taken in isolation, would be sufficient to describe a racist attitude. Racist

statements are contextual. It is also noteworthy that most forms of denial are characterized by easy availability, comments on the causes of racially based disadvantage that, at the level of nonreflective everyday discourse, are never in short supply (for example, "Roma drop out of school because they are poor"). Yet, the person making this statement will say a moment later, "They are poor because they don't study well." Being "logical" is not among the qualities of "ideological" thoughts. Only upon reflection is it revealed that racist rationalizations are not rational and often form a vicious circle.

Even leaders of human rights NGOs tend to deny that Roma are victims of systematic, racially motivated violence. Despite dozens of cases of racially motivated violent crimes committed by law enforcement officials and nonstate actors, documented and broadly publicized by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) (see ERRC, July 1998), Human Rights Watch, and others, the chair of the premier human rights NGO in Macedonia could still write in 2002 on the treatment of the Roma: "The lack of an open discriminatory approach, violent behavior or attempts for forced assimilation is characteristic for Macedonia. There have been no cases of violence that had been caused by ethnic motivations or which would have elements of organized intolerance towards the Roma as a distinct ethnic group" (Najcevska, 2002: 84).

I would suggest interpreting anti-Gypsism as a set of misconceptions and myths, both expressing and reproducing the sociopolitical weakness of the Romani community. *Misconceptions* are false ideas about the Roma as they are today, even though misconceptions may have started in the past from some elements of truth. *Myths,* on the other hand, are not untruths: they are practical truths one can take as assumptions and reach pragmatic results, when acting upon these assumptions. But myths are not truths either: they would cease to be truths as soon as people cease to believe them.

Misconceptions about the Roma

The Misconception of Nomadism

Only some Roma in a few Western European countries (France, Ireland, Netherlands, the United Kingdom) are still nomadic, with large caravans having long ago replaced horse carts. The overwhelming majority of the Roma throughout the world have been settled for decades—some for centuries. But the association of Roma with nomadism nevertheless remains strong (on the manipulative misconception of official Italian policy, for example, see ERRC, October 2000: 8-12). As Fraser wrote, "Settled people, on the whole, do not trust nomads; and in a European society where the majority were pressed into a life of piety, serfdom and drudgery, Gypsies represented a blatant negation of all the essential values and premises on which the dominant morality was based" (Fraser, 1995: 126). On the other hand, in the European mind the nomad is wrapped in a cloud of romantic fantasy—a perception of freedom understood as carelessness.[5] An intrinsic element of this fantasy is the unrepressed Gypsy woman—"Carmen" or "Esmeralda" dancing in harmony with nature. In this context one can also see the economic element of the stereotype, encompassing the Gypsy attitude to money and accumulation of wealth. Roma are still believed to be uninterested in long-term security and to regard wealth as a means to show their status in the community. Their consumption patterns have also been explained as hand-to-mouth attitudes bordering on irresponsibility. The lack of saving strategies, which is caused by elementary poverty and discriminatory rejection by the official credit institutions, is misunderstood as a conscious choice.

The Misconception of Romani Crime

Historic sources do support the view that some of the Roma—those moving into Western Europe—resorted to stealing as a means of subsistence. Fortune telling and other forms of mystifi-

cation, such as forging safe conducts, or the legend of the religious pilgrimage used by the Roma in Western Europe to ensure safety and extort privileges, money, and other benefits, helped congeal their reputation as a people with low sense of morals. But the construction of this reputation took place five or six centuries ago. Yet today, the Gypsies remain married to crime in the public mind. Crime is a form of social control. Different societies have different ideas of what constitutes a higher danger to their existence. Those actions and practices that are seen as dangerous are arranged in a hierarchy of crimes. Crime statistics in some countries have revealed a pattern of overrepresentation of Roma in several types of crime, notably petty stealing. But it should be remembered that crime statistics necessarily contain distortions. They are based on reported crime, and do not necessarily reflect the entire picture of committed offences. Robbery is a crime that has a high degree of reporting, while many other crimes, including corruption, fraudulent financial schemes such as pyramids, or domestic violence, go unreported. An act of petty robbery typically leaves behind one victim, while an act of financial fraud can destroy hundreds. Thus the visibility of robbery and of its individual perpetrators is much higher, while other, not less dangerous forms of crime lie below the surface of society. Roma are overrepresented in crime statistics especially when figures are not broken down by type of offence. Also, because of the kinds of crime reported to the police, the crimes in which Roma are suspects are investigated more vigorously. Of all pretrial investigations, those in which Roma are suspects are more likely to reach the court room; and of all court trials, those in which Roma are defendants are more likely to result in convictions. The convicted Roma are more likely to receive longer prison terms, with the result that they are significantly overrepresented in the prison population. Thus, it is misleading to claim the Roma have a "criminal propensity" based on crime statistics and the number of Roma in prison.

Still, one cannot deny the existence of Roma crime, as righteous proponents of the "Romani cause" sometimes do. It is more important to understand its nature and also to realize that Roma are also victims, not only of ordinary crime but of crimes with racial animus as well.

The Romani crime stereotype includes other elements of prejudice, especially the bizarre and thoroughly unfounded "stealing of children" legend that has metamorphosed into the current public misperception that Roma are exploiting their own children by making them engage in begging; it is a fast growing belief that Roma are involved in trafficking in children and women. In the last few years, and especially in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Roma migration has slipped into the realm of crime in public discourse.

The Misconception of the Roma's Unwillingness to Integrate

Scores of politicians, experts, and lawmakers have reiterated the widespread belief that the Romani minority's problems stem from their unwillingness to integrate into mainstream society. Is there anything true in this view? Undeniably, the Romani culture has historically been relatively closed and inaccessible to outsiders (Hancock, 2002: 67-68), which would be expected from a community constantly at risk. The period of persecution based on anti-Gypsy law in Western and Central Europe (sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) had immense consequences for later Romani history. It served to conserve a nomadic way of life for large groups of Roma in Western Europe and consolidated the Romani ethnic community on the basis of a victim mentality. While in Eastern Europe Roma were in the twentieth century well on their way to losing their traditions and becoming almost entirely sedentary, Western European Roma still remain more inward looking and protective of their tradition. This is most typical of the Sinti groups, which still express a strong preference to remain separate. However, the closed character of the Romani culture is no more. Research has consistently demonstrated that, given the

choice, Roma prefer to integrate, rather than live in a segregated, parallel society. Roma today are struggling for equal and just participation in mainstream society, while wishing to preserve their unique culture.

The Misconception of the Romani Attitude to Education

As recently as 2002, scholarly articles continued to repeat—together with governmental officials and various educators—that "Roma parents frequently do not regard education as necessary and do not encourage their children to stay in school" (Friedrich Ebert Schtiftung, 2002: 19). This is, perhaps, the most dangerous myth, since it hinders efforts of critical importance for the advancement of the Roma—namely, ensuring access to quality education for the current generation of Romani children.

Many other misconceptions are related to the Roma. European society needs to acknowledge these and develop a better understanding of the fact that Roma are our contemporaries and fellow citizens, defined primarily by their link to the society in which they live, not those of nineteenth-century literary fiction.

From the Gypsy Myth to Romani Reality

It is tempting to formulate a series of negations that express the weakness of the Roma when compared with other ethnocultural groups: Roma lack that which most other nations have. They have no state, no history, no army, no language, no religion, no ethnicity, and no spirit of solidarity. Let us look briefly at each of these composite parts of the contemporary Gypsy myth.

No state: Roma are thought not to have a sense of a common country of origin. Only in the last few decades has it become established that they originate from India. But there are even today many Roma who do not know this. Even more significant, Roma never attempted to establish statehood in Europe and are believed to have no territorial aspirations.

No history: Roma have no history in the sense of an official and institutionalized nationalistic, Romacentric grand narrative, complete with national heroes and a shared historic consciousness.

No military force: It is widely believed that Roma have never been involved in military activities, nor have they been freedom fighters taking up arms to achieve their collective goals.

No language: The language spoken by Roma is viewed as a set of dialects that do not allow fluent communication across geographic space. It is stressed that there is no normative vocabulary or grammar and no sufficient institutional framework by which to develop them.

No religion: The Roma usually adopt the confession of the surrounding majority, while some underlying beliefs and magic-related customs vary widely across their communities. Unlike Jews, for example, Roma have no sacred book to act as a unifying device.

No ethnicity: It is commonly believed throughout Europe that Gypsies are not a separate ethnic group at all, but a mix of people made up of the marginalized fringes of many different societies. Hancock (2002: 31) even quotes a nineteenth-century belief that the Gypsies deliberately stain their faces with green nutshell to increase their ugliness and more easily induce naïve people to believe that they come from the Orient. In 1633, the Spanish King Philip IV considered the Roma to be Spanish rogues who had made up an artificial language.

No solidarity: A frequently repeated observation refers to the fragmentation of Romani political efforts, resulting in a predictable inefficiency. "Gypsy work" in many languages is synonymous with quarrel, irrational communication, lack of trust among the participants, badmouthing and stabbing in the back, and ultimately, utter incompetence in handling any endeavor.

All these are elements of a myth. Romani nationhood (if not a territorial statehood), official history, armed power potential, normative language, solid ethnocultural identity, religion, and group solidarity are all possibilities, with each having reached a certain

stage of its realization. However, at this time the myth is still a practical truth that participates in reproducing the weakness of the Roma in sociopolitical terms. The elements of the Gypsy myth spell out the non-Romani majority idea of what constitutes the power of a people.

Let us note, however, that the classical nationalistic idea of power is increasingly anachronistic. Nonclassical resources of negotiating and sanctioning power are developing in the world and the Roma have the chance to tap into them. Indeed, this is exactly what is happening with the advancing Romani movement: it is reaching out to economic, political, and cultural actors and alliances other than those existing in the context of a classical nation-state. Paradoxically, exactly because the Roma are latecomers to the nation-state universe, they may be the forerunners of new forms of the exercise of power and power participation.

Even the simple mention of the aforementioned absences as specific elements of the Romani experience is likely to be met with resistance by Roma themselves. For example, group solidarity is growing in the Romani movement and has become inherent in the rules of the struggle for power inside the community and in representing the Roma to the outside world. The building of a Romani ethnocultural identity is under way. And we observe both internal homogenization and fortification of the borders of the Romani identity. The standardization of Romani language is also taking place. It is not historically accurate that Roma have never fought in armies. For example, in Sweden during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in Russia and in other areas, Roma males served in the army and their families were sustained by the military as well (Etzler, n.d.: 83-84). There is no ground to believe that Roma are immune to the option of resorting to violent armed struggle only because no major uprising has taken place in the past. Romani historiography as well will soon progress to the point that a certain canon will prevail and the white spots will be included and encapsulated. Finally, self-determination has been the subject of recent discussions among Romani elites (Project on

Ethnic Relations, 2003: 4). The controversial idea, launched in July 2000 by the International Romani Union, that Roma should be internationally recognized as an exterritorial nation and as a subject of public international law, is being debated among Roma. The prospect of Romani statehood seems utterly unrealistic, of course, yet a statist thinking pattern whose teleology is a state-like formation can be read between the lines of the Romani struggle for power.

Roma Rights: A Counterpoint to Anti-Gypsism

Roma rights discourse, which was triggered in 1996 with the formation of the European Roma Rights Center, has identified racism, intolerance, discrimination, and exclusion as the daily reality of the Roma in Europe. The Roma rights discourse is developing according to the standards of international human rights discourse. It is a bridge to reality in the sense that its conceptualizations are seeking to deconstruct the Gypsy myth and, with minimal concessions to political correctness or other ideological censorship, point in the direction of a world in which being Roma is not in any way a reduction from general humanity. For example, if a full-time Romani employee does not come to her office for a number of days for no reason and if her supervisor pretends not to notice, in the name of affirmative action or political correctness, or for fear of being seen as racist, we have in place of the real person another myth: the righteous Romani victim of discrimination. In activist organizations employing Roma or working with Roma, this occurs frequently. One day, a supervisor who is not a racist will treat an abusive Romani employee without prejudice and act exactly the same as if the person in question were not Romani. At this point, "Roma" will at last cease being an ideology and will become reality. (The example is somewhat artificial to make the point that Roma rights is a discourse and not a reality; it is a much more likely scenario, in Eastern Europe at

least, that a racially biased boss would happily fire a Romani employee who failed to make the necessary excuses for not coming to work.)

The Roma, however, remain a pariah minority almost everywhere. In many countries they are not officially recognized as a minority at all. In some countries, such as Greece and Turkey, the problem of the Roma status is compounded by the low level of recognition, within society, of its multicultural reality. Some states explicitly recognize the Roma as a national or ethnic minority (Hungary, Macedonia, Romania) or as a culturally autonomous nation (Russia), but there is no successful model of either autonomous self-government or equal participation in mainstream institutions.

The economic situation of the Roma deteriorated during the first decade of postcommunism at a speed that dwarfed that of any other ethnic group. Analysts who have described communist societies in terms of social equality, full employment. and obligatory education, as well as ethnic homogeneity, have stressed that the rapid unraveling of the economic status of the Roma in the 1990s is due exclusively to the new forces of nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and other forms of intolerance specific to postcommunism. Anti-Gypsism features prominently among the new hate ideologies. A very large part of the Roma at present expresses nostalgic appreciation of the communist past and a tendency to divide the blame for their current economic disadvantage between capitalism and racial discrimination.

While both are indeed part of the root causes of today's Romani poverty, there is another factor less frequently invoked, namely, the disadvantaged starting position of the Roma at the threshold of the new system around 1990. Social equality never existed in the societies of "real socialism." The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe occupied the lowest strata of the working classes. They had the lowest levels of education and income, were mainly employed as unskilled workers in industry, construction, forestry, and in some unattractive occupations, such as garbage

collection and slaughterhouse personnel. Thus, there was nothing close to an equal start for the Roma in the postcommunist economy.

This explanation, however, is inaccurate regarding the Roma and similar Gypsy groups in Russia, Ukraine, and arguably other former Soviet republics. Unlike Central and Eastern Europe, in the countries of the former Soviet Union the Gypsies, including the Roma, were never fully proletarianized. They largely remained outside the social engineering projects of the central authorities. As was mentioned earlier, they occupied the niches of unofficial intermediaries in the informal sector, profiting from their role as unregulated merchants and distributors in the shortage economy. This role was made possible by a preservation of a higher degree of mobility and self-reliance than was the case in Central and Eastern Europe. While the Roma in Hungary or Bulgaria were the poorest members of the communist labor force, those in the Soviet Union were relatively prosperous. Their rapid decline after the fall of communism is the result of a different dynamic. In the Brezhnev era, large sections of the Roma community were part of the socioeconomic elites, their living standards higher than the Soviet average, because of their positions as profitable mediators in a shortage economy. After the end of communism, the Roma in the 1990s found the stores filled with a variety of goods and a market that quickly developed services at the same time that the average consumer lost her purchasing power. The need for mediation between money holders and commodities disappeared, and Roma were set on a path to economic decline. Most tried to legalize their business activities, but regardless of whether they operated legally, semilegally, or illegally, the Roma simply lost their competitive edge in the face of the new financial oligarchy and its numerous mafia-like branches (Marushiakova and Popov, 2003). Still, many Romani families in the former Soviet Union retain to date their economically stronger position, as compared with the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe, for whom rampant poverty is the rule.

Although reliable economic statistics on the Roma's situation in these countries are not available, abundant evidence can be found that the image of the Roma is increasingly worsening. Anti-Gypsism appears to be extremely high in the former Soviet countries as well, judging from the increasing number of racist attacks targeting the Roma in Russia and Ukraine, and the yet unchallenged portrayal of Roma in the media as bandits, drug dealers, and traffickers.

Recent economic and social statistics testify to the overall low status of the Roma in European societies. For example, over 40 percent of Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia are unemployed (UNDP, 2002: 2), compared with one-digit unemployment figures for the general population. Only 10 percent of Romani schoolchildren in Croatia eventually finish elementary school (Radakovic, 2002: 57). In Yugoslavia, the Roma are the ethnic group with the highest illiteracy rate, 34.8 percent, and the largest percentage of people who have not finished elementary school, 78.7 percent. The share of Roma who have graduated from college is just 0.4 percent (Mitrovic, 2000: 161.) According to a survey on the health conditions of the Roma in Borsod County in northeast Hungary, published in November 2002 (Czene, 2002), the life expectancy of the Romani population is approximately 10 years lower than that of other groups. Ninety percent of Romani households in the county are without natural gas and between 40 and 50 percent are without water. One-quarter of the Roma between the ages of 19 and 39 have not graduated from primary school. According to this Hungarian survey, 75 percent of Romani men and 90 percent of Romani women in the county are permanently unemployed. The survey reveals that a substantial portion of the Romani population suffers from illnesses that can be traced back to their extremely poor living conditions. The prevalence of tuberculosis among the Roma is 10 times higher than the national average. The incidence of malignant tumors is also higher. According to the survey, iron-deficiency abscess, said to be a typical disease in developing coun-

tries, afflicts the Roma 10 times more often than the national average. Approximately 8 percent of the Romani population suffers from illnesses of psychological origin (stress, despair). Since, in general, drugs are too expensive, Roma tend to use cheap organic dissolvents and other psychoactive substances. As a result of this, drug-related illnesses are four times more frequent among the Roma than the rest of society. This could be a snapshot of the economic and social disadvantage of Roma in almost any corner of any country where Roma live.

Roma are more likely to have suffered the consequences of natural disaster, especially floods and fires, because their settlements and homes are cheap and unsafe. The floods in the Czech Republic in the summer of 2002 left many Roma homeless, and the authorities were slow to provide decent accommodation, thus adding to the pattern of disproportionate disaster outcomes from flooding of Roma settlements in the entire Central and Eastern European region.

The documentation on Roma human rights has grown to fill dozens of volumes. The European Roma Rights Center has been the catalyst for this documentation (see the ERRC report titles listed in the references). This paper has invoked the Roma rights paradigm not in an attempt to present a complete picture of rights abuses, but to identify those patterns of human rights violations of which Roma are the typical and almost exclusive victims in today's Europe, and in which anti-Gypsy prejudice is clearly a major factor. These are not isolated cases of human rights violations but widespread social practices that may or may not be a result of adopted official policy. School and housing segregation, evictions, coercive sterilization, police raids and identity checks, police harassment, and collective deportation are broadly reported.

Racially Motivated Violence

In general, many reports confirm observations that Roma, together with immigrants, are particularly at risk of abuses at the

hands of law enforcement officials. In Greece, for example, "the pattern is sufficiently clear to leave little room for doubt that xenophobia and racial profiling have played a part in the human rights violations suffered by members of these groups, whose complaints have sometimes included specific allegations of racist verbal abuse by police officers" (Amnesty International and International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 2002: 6).

Evictions

A randomly chosen piece of news from the ERRC database illustrates that Roma are unwelcome neighbors and therefore can be subjected to forced eviction, abusive police raids for identity checks, and police harassment:

> On September 24, 2002, the local police force evicted around three hundred Roma from their temporary settlement in an abandoned pensioner home in a Sarajevo neighborhood in Bosnia, according to the Banjaluka daily *Nezavisne novine* of the same date. The Roma had lived in the building for around two years, and most of them were internally displaced persons who had come to Sarajevo from the regions of Republika Srpska or parts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Apparently, the eviction took place as a result of a meeting of canton and municipal authorities acting upon complaints of "noise and disorder" that the Roma allegedly created.

The inhabitants of this settlement had been subjected to an abusive police raid several months earlier. On June 29, 2002 the Sarajevo daily *Dnevni avaz* reported that, late in the evening on June 27, 2002, 76 police officers from Sarajevo Canton raided the pensioner home. Police reportedly surrounded the temporary settlement and performed an intensive identification check on the approximately three hundred Roma living in the settlement. The police violently searched through the belongings of Roma living there. The police were wearing masks and did not provide

an explanation for the search. On July 27, 2002, the Bosnian radio station Radio BORAM reported that the police claimed the search had been conducted following reports of drug trafficking in the settlement. However, according to *Dnevni avaz*, the police stated that no drugs had been found during the search. Just before the raid, on June 25, an unspecified number of police officers from the Ilidja police station visited the pensioner home to "warn" the Roma. According to the Sarajevo daily *Oslobodjenje* of June 26, 2002, the Ilidja municipality police had sent a detailed report on the Romani settlement to the Ministry of Interior of the Sarajevo Canton, urging that the Romani inhabitants be moved to another location, due to noticed "criminal activity of the Roma and their jeopardizing of the local traffic through begging."

Fortress Europe Policies

As Central and Eastern European countries with the largest Romani minorities are negotiating their way into the European Union, Roma are being demoralized by the hypocrisy and double standards of the Western democracies when they attempt to travel to the West. The inclusion of respect for Roma rights in the political conditionality of EU membership has served as a powerful leverage for addressing if not significantly improving the situation of the Roma. Yet the message coming from the West has a shamelessly racist twist: although Roma are admittedly frequent victims of racist persecution, they are expected to stay at home and not attempt to move to Western Europe, Canada, or the United States. To those coming from EU candidate countries that are nearing accession, even a consideration of asylum claims is being denied. Hundreds of Roma were deported from Western Europe to Eastern European candidate states in 2002 by the immigration authorities of Belgium, France, Italy, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The Roma are subject to humiliating forms of discrimination in accessing their right to travel abroad, no matter for what purposes.

The European Roma Rights Center has brought a lawsuit against the United Kingdom Home Office because of the British immigration checks at Prague airport that discriminate against Czech Roma trying to travel to the United Kingdom. Pre-check in clearance was installed in July 2001 as part of a special arrangement with the Czech government, allowing British immigration officials to turn back passengers before they even reached the plane to travel to Britain.[6] In October 2002, Justice Burton ruled at London High Court that the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees did not prevent United Kingdom authorities "from taking steps to prevent a potential refugee from approaching [the UK] border in order to be in a position to claim asylum, or [making it] more difficult for them to do so" (Travis, 2002). He said that the existence of an "anti-Roma diatribe" and other criticism in the Czech press did not amount to evidence of racial discrimination. The ERRC immediately lodged an appeal, and in January 2003 was granted leave to appeal.

Coercive returns of refugees from the former Yugoslavia have been under way since the mid-1990s. Recently, German police began to break into the flats of Yugoslav Roma who had been seeking asylum in Germany during the last 12 years in order to deport them to their homeland. According to the testimonies of returnees, German police, shouting that they are a fire brigade, break into flats of Romani families in the middle of the night; they then show the occupants a recent agreement on the readmission of Yugoslav citizens from Western Europe, and give them 25 minutes to pack that which they want to take with them. The families are taken to the nearest airport, and deported to Belgrade with Yugoslav Airlines charter flights.

Segregation

Like numerous ethnic minorities around the world, Roma live in considerably segregated housing and most attend separate schools. In the case of contemporary Roma, the separation is not their choice. Evidence suggests that most Roma want to live,

study, and work together with the rest of society, but are vehemently rejected. Segregated settlements, schools, and hospital rooms are not just physically separate—they are generally much poorer in quality. In the case of the Roma, these facts, seen in the context of entrenched and harsh racist attitudes toward this pariah minority, define a case of racial segregation: a particularly egregious form of racial discrimination, an assault on human dignity condemned by international human rights law.

Racial segregation of the Roma in education exists in a variety of forms. The various types of segregated schooling in Europe can be divided into two main patterns: 1) Roma attending "special schools" or classes for the mentally retarded, where the official curricula are based on inferior academic standards; 2) Roma attending separate or predominantly Romani schools or classes, where the official curricula are based on the same academic standards as in the rest of the national school system, but the quality of education is nonetheless lower. In the second case, residential segregation of Roma is one of the factors in school segregation, but is not sufficient to explain its existence (Surdu, 2002: 11). Both forms of segregation are an expression of a large social distance and constitute racial segregation, in violation of international antidiscrimination law.

The "special schools" for Roma are most obvious in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia, but can be found in a number of other countries as well. In the Czech Republic, more than 70 percent of all Romani children of school age go to inferior "special schools" and are stigmatized for life as mentally handicapped (European Roma Rights Center, June 1999). In the Czech "special schools" system, the educational standards for a given school grade correspond to those of two grades lower: a pupil who has graduated from fourth grade in the "special school" is expected to demonstrate the scholastic achievement of a second grader in a normal school. There is less emphasis in the curriculum on mathematics, science, and language, and more on music and applied art. The situation in Slovakia is similar. A Romani mother

from Letanovce told the ERRC in October 2002 that "My daughter was transferred to special school after the 1st grade—she is there already for 2 years and doesn't even recognise the letters of the alphabet—if she were in the normal primary school, I am sure she would already have learned that."

In Hungary, the ERRC has documented cases of abuse of parental consent in allocating Romani children to "special schools." On September 13, 2002, a Romani mother told the ERRC that:

> My daughter started primary school in a normal class, but she felt that she received no attention from teachers as compared to her non-Romani classmates. Due to the negligence of the teacher she failed one time. She was taken to the remedial special class immediately. I was not even asked or informed about it in time, only after the transfer. They said that she could not keep up with the others, so they transferred her. I suffered because my child felt very bad. She was labeled stupid, although she might have just needed some more attention.

Nor is the testing procedure for special schools racially neutral. A non-Romani teacher in a remedial "special school" in Budapest stated to the ERRC on November 18, 2002: "Romani children are usually enrolled in remedial special school without seeing the normal school. The transfer, in fact, is often based on the single opinion from the 30-minute long examination of the expert committee. Non-Romani children usually get two or three chances and have already failed the second or third year of the school several times when they are transferred to a remedial special school. Many Roma are placed there immediately."

Unlike the special schools, the "normal" segregated schools, in which Roma are either over-represented or constitute the only ethnic group educated there, follow the same mandatory national curricula and in theory should apply the same standards of academic achievement. But it is the case that they provide a poorer

education because of poorly qualified and motivated teacher body, crowded classrooms, inadequate materials, and racist prejudice about Roma attitudes to education. Teachers often blame Roma pupils for this result, exploiting the myth of alleged low interest in school performance. The vice director of a school in Alexandria, Romania, told the ERRC: "We have to simplify very much the school program for Romani pupils so that they understand. Usually they are only taught the main ideas in the lessons. And still this is sometimes too much for them."

It is unclear whether the emerging political will in Bulgaria and Hungary to desegregate the schools will continue, and whether desegregation has a chance to become official policy in the region. It is still less clear whether European courts will one day agree with the reasoning of the United States Supreme Court in 1954 when it decided the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* and ruled that "separate but equal" is not "equal."

In the case of Romani ghetto schools, however, it cannot be said that the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors are equal with mainstream schools. The following excerpt illustrates the inferiority to which there are rarely any exceptions in Central and Eastern Europe (and those exception are a couple of elite Romani ethnic schools in Hungary and the Czech Republic):

> October 11, 2002. We visited Gura Văii, outside of Oneşti. All of the Roma in Gura Văii live on Morii Street, away from the Romanians in the town. The roads were dirt, and due to morning rain, were very muddy. This settlement was not among the poorest that we saw. . . . The school that the Romani children attend was in the middle of the settlement. We entered the school, which had to be opened by one of the teachers after repeated knocking because it was locked from the inside. There were only two rooms in the school. In one room, there was seating for twenty-two children, and in the other, there were twenty-fours seats. It was a cold day, and there was no heat in the school, although

there was a wood stove in the corner of one of the classrooms. There were no lights in either of the rooms or the entrance, and in fact, no electricity in the school. The Romani children were in class while we were in the school, and there were no books in either of the rooms. There were no textbooks for the children that I saw, no notebooks in front of any of the children, no pencils, no pens or any school supplies of any kind. There was no sign of a learning environment. One of the teachers, who would not give her name, told us that one hundred and sixty children were registered in the school. She also told us that there were four teachers. At around 2:00 PM when we went in the school, it was already dark inside and hard to see. From the outside, there was glass in all the windows, but I could see up under the roof the structure was not solid. This would likely allow much cold air in during the winter months.

We also visited the school that the Romanian children in Gura Văii attend. The school was much larger, with at least four classrooms. The school had electricity and heating and the children were not forced to sit in their jackets to stay warm as in the Romani school. There were no Romani children, although the Mayor had said that there were some. The classroom was large, the desks were in much better condition than those in the Romani school. The children in this school all had textbooks, notebooks, pens and pencils in front of them. There were plants all around and artwork that the students had produced, as opposed to the barren walls in the Romani school. There was a playground in the schoolyard (there was no yard at the Romani school) with soccer and basketball nets. There was also a caretaker for the school." (From ERRC archives: Report from field trip to Romania, filed October 2002).

Sterilization

From the 1970s until 1990, the Czechoslovak government sterilized Romani women as part of a policy aimed at reducing the "high, unhealthy" birthrate of Romani women. The policy was condemned by the Czechoslovak dissident group Charter 77, and documented in the late 1980s by dissidents Zbenek Andrs and Ruben Pellar. Human Rights Watch addressed the issue in a comprehensive 1993 report on the situation of Roma in Czechoslovakia, concluding that the practice had ended in mid-1990. Criminal complaints filed with Czech and Slovak prosecutors on behalf of groups of sterilized Romani women in each republic were dismissed in 1992 and 1993.

Throughout the late 1990s, there have been periodic indications that the practice may be continuing. In Slovakia in particular, the purported high birthrate of Roma is a regular feature in public discourse on the Roma, frequently in the context of right-wing rhetoric warning that "they will outnumber us by 2050." We believe Slovakia is allowing contraceptive sterilizations of Romani women absent acceptable—and in many cases even rudimentary—standards of informed consent. Our findings indicate that women are often coerced by doctors and nurses to give consent to sterilization. In Slovakia, women who give birth through a caesarian operation for a second or third time are offered to exercise their right to contraceptive sterilization, based on the outdated theory that a third or fourth caesarian will lead to grave harm to or even the death of the woman or the fetus. We found many cases of women who underwent their second or third caesarian section and were sterilized because of the purported "risks" involved in another pregnancy. The Slovakian sterilization law supports this practice by listing consecutive c-sections as a medical indication for sterilization. In the case of abusive sterilizations, we believe we are looking at a very wide variety of factual issues, broadly within the following parameters: 1) cases in which consent has been secured, and such consent meets medical, ethical, and legal standards of full and informed consent; we believe such cases constitute approximately 10 to 20 percent of the cases we have seen; 2) at the other end of the spectrum, cases in which there

may be criminal malpractice: a woman has been sterilized, although she has not given any form of consent; 3) cases in which some form of consent has been given for sterilization, but that consent has not been "informed": misinformation, manipulative information, pressure, tricks, bluster, etc., have been applied so authorities can secure "consent," or clear and understandable information has not been provided to patient prior to seeking her consent. The overwhelming majority of the cases we have recorded fall into this "grey zone." On the basis of preliminary research, we believe similar concerns can be raised in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Lack of Personal Documents

Roma in the countries of the former Yugoslavia face significant difficulties in obtaining basic personal documents, such as birth certificates, identity cards, local residence permits, documents related to (in most cases, state-provided) health insurance, marriage certificates, work booklets, death certificates, passports, internally displaced person and refugee registration documents. Exclusionary obstacles created by a lack of documents can be daunting and in many instances, the lack of one document can lead to a "chain reaction" in which the individual at issue is unable to secure a number of other documents. In an extreme case, a Romani person without a birth certificate may face complete exclusion from the exercise of basic rights: precluded access to basic health care, freedom of movement hindered (including the right to leave one's own country), denial of the right to vote, exclusion from state housing provided to persons from socially weak groups, and denial of access to other rights and services crucial for basic human dignity.[7]

Conclusion: The Romani Movement

Although in several countries Roma cannot formally create political organizations based on ethnicity (Albania, Bulgaria, Rus-

sia, Turkey), Roma political organizing is developing. In Bulgaria the courts effectively ignore the constitutional limitation and allow the registration of Romani parties. Almost everywhere, numerous Roma groups are emerging at all levels, at the grassroots as well as the national. International umbrella organizations are also taking shape.

In the last few years, the Romani movement in Central and Eastern Europe has entered a period of consciousness building along identity lines, aimed at mass mobilization and political participation (see "The Romani movement," 2001). But as with other identity movements in other times and places, we have observed the disturbing characteristic trends: an emphasis on ideological tenets, a construction of cults of personality, and conversely, creation of "enemies of the struggle." The "ideology" emerging within the Romani movement contains an emphasis on defending the ethnic line, as well as a preoccupation with poverty as a mode of solidarity. Romani leaders in Hungary have sought alliances with, for example, groups that defend the homeless. This political cosmology has discovered, in non-Roma defenders of Roma rights, a convenient bogey. These and other non-Roma working on various aspects of Roma-related issues currently provide a convenient medium through which the members of an otherwise fragmented and contentious Romani leadership can overcome their differences.[8]

Whether the Romani movement will lean toward anachronistic, trivial nationalist consolidation, or will create a civic mobilization with a vision that draws its power from new sources in a globalizing world remains to be seen. What seems obvious at this juncture is that the availability of the second road depends on a culture of human rights, both inside and outside the Romani movement.

It is clear, however, that the Romani movement is struggling to overcome its pariah status among other movements, very much like the Roma themselves are struggling to emancipate themselves from both their pariah image and their disadvantaged position in society. It is the Romani movement embracing a human rights

agenda that can lead the Roma out of the Gypsy myth, and offer them choices in an uncertain but real life, nonfictitious future.

Notes

[1]Some Romani activists have opposed the reference to a "Roma problem" and consider the very phrase to be based on racist premises. Indeed, from the point of view of the Roma themselves, Roma are not a "problem"; the *gadje* racist society is.

[2]See complete results of the census by the Bulgarian State Statistics Institute at <http://www.nsi.bg/Census/Ethnos-final-n.htm>.

[3]For example, the so-called tinkers had already lived nomadic lives on the British Isles long before the arrival of the Roma in 1430. The tinkers were also Gypsy-like tribes, whose occupations (typically metal work) were similar to those of the Roma. They may also have been of Indian origin and, merging with the Roma who arrived in the fifteenth century, constitute today the Gypsy Traveler groups. Their language is so strongly anglicized that no interpretation to or from English is necessary; and the physical appearance of the Travelers is undistinguishable from that of the British, perhaps because of some mixing with the local inhabitants in a limited territory. Even today, many people in the United Kingdom and Ireland are surprised to hear that Traveler (or even Gypsy) is an ethnic identity designation and that Travelers consider themselves a separate ethnocultural group. There is a widespread misconception that "Traveler" and "Gypsy" stand simply for a lifestyle. This is reflected in the frequent spelling of the latter with a small initial "g".

[4]Episodes of feudal personal dependency similar to enslavement were characteristic of other countries as well. In sixteenth-century England, King Edward VI passed a law according to which recaptured Gypsies who had previously been branded with a "V" sign had to be branded with "S" and enslaved for life. Some Gypsies were used as a slave-like labor force in the Spanish and Portuguese fleet; Gypsies were state property in Russia during the reign of Catherine the Great, as well as in Scotland (Hancock, 2002: 26-28).

[5]On the origins of romanticizing stereotyping, see Ascherson:

> The Greek tragedians, when they had invented the barbarians, soon began to play with the "inner barbarism" of Greeks. Perhaps part of the otherness of barbarians was that unlike the civilized, they were morally all of a piece—not dualistic characters in which a good nature warred with a bad, but whole. The "Hippocratic"

> doctors, the unknown writers of the Greek medical treatises wrongly attributed to the physician Hippocrates, asserted in *Airs, Waters, Places* that Scythians and all "Asians" resembled one another physically, while "Europeans" differed sharply in size and appearance from one city to another. Barbarians were homogeneous; civilized people were multiform and differentiated. The Greek tragedians thought this might be true about minds as well as bodies. If it was, they were not sure that the contrast between Greek and barbarian psychology—the first complex and inhibited, the second supposed to be spontaneous and natural—was altogether complimentary to the Greeks. Somewhere here begins Europe's long unfinished ballad of yearning for noble savages, for hunter-gatherers in touch with themselves and their ecology, for cowboys, cattle-reivers [thieves], gypsies and Cossacks, for Bedouin nomads and aboriginals walking their song-lines through the unspoiled wilderness" (1996: 82-83).

[6]An authorization under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act, signed by Home Office Minister Barbara Roche in April 2001, specified seven ethnic or national groups whom immigration officers were empowered to refuse entry to the United Kingdom outright on the basis of their race or nationality. These included Afghans—even while Britain was at war with the Taliban regime and denouncing its abuses against the Afghan people—Kurds, Tamils, Somalis, and Roma. The European Roma Rights Center has since conducted a study involving "white" and Roma Czech citizens of similar circumstances and found a marked difference in their treatment at the Prague airport. The United Kingdom secretary of state admitted in court that this was a policy designed to prevent asylum seekers from reaching the UK, where their claims would have to be properly considered. We believe this clearly contravenes the Geneva Convention on Refugees and risks driving people toward less open and legitimate means of entry. Our six clients in this case all went to the Prague airport to catch flights to London during the course of July 2001. All had valid airline tickets. All are Czech nationals—and so did not need a visa for travel to the United Kingdom. Yet all were singled out for extended questioning apparently by reference to the color of their skin. They were prevented from traveling to the United Kingdom.

[7]See the information on a workshop organized by European Roma Rights Center in Igalo, Montenegro, in September 2002, on the theme of "Personal Documents and Threats to the Exercise of Fundamental Rights among Roma in the FRY" <http://www.errc.org>.

[8]I am indebted to Claude Cahn for formulating this point.

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Notes on Contributors

Wendy Doniger is Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of History of Religions in the University of Chicago Divinity School. Her recent publications include a new translation of the *Kamasutra* (with Sudhir Kakar, 2002) and *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* (2000).

Oz Frankel is Assistant Professor of History at the Committee on Historical Studies at the New School University's Graduate Faculty. His book, *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations, Explorations, and Print Culture in Nineteenth Century U.S. and Britain,* is forthcoming from Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sagarika Ghose, a novelist and journalist, has been closely involved with the movement among Dalit intellectuals of north India to find a voice within the cultural mainstream. Her novel, *The Gin Drinkers* (2000), is based on the manner in which the Indian upper castes have monopolized modern education and describes how Dalits have been ghettoized into the "political" and "official" realms.

Ian Neary has recently published *The State and Politics in Japan* (2002) and *Human Rights in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan* (2002). He is currently working on a biography of Matsumoto Jiichiro.

David Nirenberg is the Charlotte Bloomberg Professor in the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (1996). His recent publications include "Enmity and Assimilation: Jews, Christians, and Converts in Medieval Spain" (*Common Knowledge,* 2003).

Dimitrina Petrova is the Executive Director of the European Roma Rights Center in Budapest and teaches in the Human Rights Program of the Central European University in Budapest.

Gayatri Reddy is Assistant Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and History at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her paper, "Crossing 'Lines' of Subjectivity: The Negotiation of Sexual Identity in Hyderabad, India," appeared in *South Asia* in 2001.

Michael Rubin is a visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent monograph is *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran* (2001). His commentary about Iraq and the Kurds has appeared in *The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal,* and *The New Republic.*

Ephraim Shoham-Steiner is a Kreitman Postdoctoral Fellow in the History Department, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev at Be'er Sheva, Israel. He is currently working on a book on Jewish social attitudes toward marginal individuals (the physically impaired, lepers and madmen) in medieval European Jewish communities.