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## **The Roma - a Nation without a State?**

### **Historical Background and Contemporary Tendencies**

For centuries after they came to Europe the Gypsies were subjected to various types of state policy. Gradually and relatively slowly ideas emerged in the Gypsy community about their place in the society where they are living and the potential for their development as a united community.

The Gypsies are internally segmented as a community and live in different countries with different social and political environments, nevertheless the idea of the unity of their community and its equality to the rest of the nations has emerged in modern times. This conceptual development is complex, multi-directional and influenced by various factors. The ideas are most often perceived under the "outside" influence of the social environment and the Gypsies often seek analogies with other nations.

Here we will make an overview of the main political ideas for development of the Gypsy community – from the first historical accounts till nowadays. In this point of view we cannot talk about a straightforward and one-directional evolution of one underlying paradigm, which gradually develops with time. This phenomenon is a long search and testing of many options, mutually crossing, complementing, combining and sometimes even contradicting one another.

#### *1. Early Civil Right Movements*

From a chronological point of view the first testimonies of Gypsy aspiration towards civil emancipation and equal status of their nation can be found in the 19th c. on the Balkans within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. The Balkan nations who were

part of the Empire were beginning to form their ethnic and national states and national churches according to the established Christian Orthodox traditions. In 1868 the Bulgarian newspaper “Macedonia” published in Istanbul, printed “A letter to the editor” signed by an “Egyptian” (i.e. Gypsy). The author of the letter, Ilia Naumchev from Prilep (today a town in Macedonia) used arguments to plead for the right of the Gypsies as an ancient people to have religious worship in their own language and for the necessity of “making a society and taking care of education”.<sup>1</sup>

As a whole the logic of Gypsy community development, described in the letter of Ilia Naumchev repeated the pattern of development of the other Balkan nations in the 19th c. – creation of their own system of education, their own church with services in their own language, and eventually, without especially mentioning, the implied perspective of their own state. Whether these ideas were altogether realistic in view of the situation of the Gypsy community on the Balkans back then is another question. However, the emergence of such ideas was a fact, which could not be ignored. Ilia Naumchev himself became, at the end of his life, a clergyman in the Bulgarian Exarchate (an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church in conditions of Ottoman Empire) and nowadays he is no longer remembered by anybody in his native town.

It was only normal that these ideas emerged on the Balkans where the Gypsies had lived for centuries within the borders of the Ottoman Empire and most of them were no longer nomads. The Gypsies were integrated in the Ottoman Empire with their own social and civil status, which was very similar to the status of other nations subjects of the Empire.<sup>2</sup> The Gypsies have had civil rights since the 15th c., unlike the Gypsies in Central and Western Europe who achieved this social status much later. That was why the development of the Gypsies, at least on the level of ideas, was very similar to the development of the other Balkan nations among who they lived.

Here it is good to give an example of the civil status of the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire. In 1693 the Gypsy man Selim, son of Osman, a baker, addressed the court in Sarajevo asking to be exempt from paying “djizie” (a tax paid by the non-Muslims and the Muslim Gypsies). He submitted proof of behaving and living as a Muslim and paying all taxes as a Muslim. The court granted him the exemption.<sup>3</sup> Of course, as it

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<sup>1</sup> *Macedonia* newspaper, Tsarigrad, year I, Nr. 32, 8.8.1867, p. 3. The letter was published, translated into English and commented in: *Studii Romani*, vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> Marushiakova / Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 47-49.

has been said many times, many of the problems in the Ottoman Empire were not caused by the existing laws, but by their practical implementation and it is an undisputed fact that back then the Gypsies (or at least some of them) possessed civil consciousness and ability to fight for their rights.

This point of view explains why the first Gypsy organizations in the first half of the 20th c. emerged exact in many Balkan countries. The Gypsies wanted to become equal citizens of the new ethnic and national states and their social environment without losing the specific characteristics of their community. This was the main strategic goal of the Gypsy organizations, which were founded on the Balkans back then.

The first manifestations of an organized Gypsy movement in Bulgaria were related to the new electoral law of 1901. It took away the electoral rights of some Gypsies (Muslims and nomads), which had been guaranteed in the constitution of 1879. The Gypsy congress, held in Sofia in 1905, and the protest campaign, which followed in the country were directed against this discriminatory law.<sup>4</sup>

Various Gypsy organizations were established in the 20's and 30's of the 20th c. in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Greece. Some of them published their own periodicals. The first Gypsy organization in Rumania was established in 1926, other local organizations were also established, and in 1933 the *Asociatia Generala a Tiganilor din Rumania* (General Association of the Gypsies in Rumania) and the *Uniunii Generale a Romilor din Rumania* (General Union of the Roma in Rumania) were established. The newspapers *O Rom* (Roma), *Glasul Romilor* (Voice of the Roma), *Neamul Tiganesc* (Gypsy People) and *Timpul* (Times) were published in the 30's of the 20th c.<sup>5</sup>

In 1927 *The first Serbian-Gypsy association for mutual assistance in sickness and death* was founded in Yugoslavia, and in 1935 the *Association of Belgrade Gypsies for the Celebration of the Aunt Bibia* was established which published *Romano Lil* (Roma Newspaper) newspaper. In 1939 *Prosvetni klub Jugoslavske ciganske omladine* (The Educational Club of Yugoslavian Gypsy Youth) was established which grew into *Omladina Jugoslavo-ciganska* (Yugoslavian-Gypsy Youth).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Marushiakova / Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, 29-30.

<sup>5</sup> Achim, *Tsiganii*, 127-132.

<sup>6</sup> Ackovic, *Istorija Informisanja*, 43-59.

In 1919 the Gypsy organisation *Istikbal* (The future) was founded in Bulgaria, existed several years and was resumed in 1931 as the *Mohammedan National and Educational Organization*, which published *Terbie* (Education) newspaper in 1933.<sup>7</sup>

In 1939 *Panhellenios Syllogos Ellinon Athinganon* (Pan Hellenic Cultural Association of the Greek Gypsies) was founded in Athens. Its main goal was to obtain Greek citizenship and Greek passports for the Gypsy immigrants to Greece from Asia Minor in the 20's of the 20th c.<sup>8</sup>

All Gypsy organizations on the Balkans were established independently of the respective country, without its support and their main goal often was to contradict the existing state policy.

A new phenomenon emerged in the newly created USSR - Gypsy organizations initiated by the state and functioning under the complete control of the state. In 1925 in Moscow an All-Russian Gypsy Union was founded and the following year the same union was founded in Belarus. Different Roma periodicals were published in the 20's and 30's of the 20th c. (*Romani Zoria* /Roma Daybreak/, *Nevo Drom* /New Way/) and the famous *Romen* theater was organized.<sup>9</sup> The Gypsy organizations in the countries of Eastern Europe after W.W. II and the establishment of the so-called "socialist system" were based on the same state-initiated and controlled principle.

The development of the organized Gypsy movement in Eastern Europe has so far been evaluated in a rather one-sided manner, mainly in the spirit of the cold war with an emphasis of the violation (real or alleged) of Gypsy human rights. It would not be far-fetched to say however that the state policies in Eastern Europe and the subordinate Gypsy organizations were key factors for the development of the Gypsy community and the implementation of new civil ideas in it, though this was far from the goals of the state policies. This is not a paradox and history has witnessed quite a few such processes.

The policy in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, which stimulates and supports the development of the Gypsy community often is limited in duration and contradictory in implementation. It rapidly gives way to the established national patterns of attitude towards the Gypsies, in most of the cases the aim is their

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<sup>7</sup> Marushiakova /Popov, *Gypsies (Roma) in Bulgaria*, 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> Liegois, *Roma*, 251-252.

<sup>9</sup> See: *Zigeuner des Schwarzmeergebietes*.

assimilation. Nevertheless, it is due to this policy (in spite of its strategic goals) combination with the overall political and social environment, that the Gypsies have been able to participate more or less equally in social life and develop further their civil consciousness.

The final results of these processes for the Gypsies of Central and Eastern Europe nowadays stand out clearly in contrast to the destiny of Gypsies all over the world. Here we see hundreds and even thousands of Gypsies with relatively good education and some with respectable professions - teachers, medical doctors, lawyers, members of the military and the police, journalists, artists, scientists... In the final analysis, it is due to the socialist era that a new "Gypsy elite" was created with new dimensions and values and radically different from the traditional "Gypsy" elite. Despite some weak points, this new elite, formed within a totalitarian system (including their children and grandchildren) now is an important factor in the overall development of the community though its members should not be considered as the only and leading representatives of the Gypsy community.

## 2. *The search for "Romanestan"*

A new and very important factor for the development of the Gypsy community emerged in the first half of the 20th c. In only a few decades the massive Gypsy waves of migration, which began in the second half of the 19th c. from the lands of what today is Rumania, changed the picture of the Gypsy community scattered in different countries and continents all over the world. The community of Gypsy groups usually united under the name *Kalderash* or *Vlax/Olah* [Wallachian] Rrom was formed in the then principalities of Wallachia and Moldova. Though they had the statute of slaves in the principalities, the forefathers of these Gypsy groups (the so-called *Leyash*) had actually been nomads for centuries. They paid an annual tax and were free to move from one place to another without limitation,<sup>10</sup> they also preserved their internal autonomous self-government and remained almost non-integrated in the social environment where they lived with no feeling of belonging to the place or country where they lived (often temporarily).

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<sup>10</sup> Kogalnitchan, *Skizze einer Geschichte der Zigeuner*; Serboianu, *Les Tsiganes*.

It is exactly among the representatives of this new wave of migration and especially the group of Kelderara settled in Poland, that the idea about a Gypsy state occurred for the first time in the 20's and 30's of the 20th c. This idea is related to the so called "Gypsy kings" from the dynasty (or rather family) Kwiek - Dimiter Kwiek, Gregor Kwiek, Michal I Kwiek, Michal II Kwiek, Jozef Kwiek, Bazil Kwiek, Janusz Kwiek, Rudolf Kwiek.<sup>11</sup>

The institution of the so-called "Gypsy kings" (or rather an imitation of an institution for the sake of the surrounding population) is a phenomenon, which is well known in history. Since the Gypsies came to Western Europe in the 15th c. the historical sources noted their "king Sindel, the dukes Andrash, Mihali and Panuel", and other "princes of Little Egypt".<sup>12</sup> This is a case of presenting their leaders according to the general terminology in order to mislead the European rulers into granting privileges for the Gypsies. Later on, the institution of the "Gypsy kings" appeared in Polish Commonwealth in the 17th-18th c.. It was most often headed by non-Gypsies who were responsible to the state for collecting taxes from the Gypsies.<sup>13</sup> Probably it was under their influence that the *Shero rom* (head of the Roma) institution originated among the Polish Roma. The *Shero rom* institution still exists today and solves a number of problems in the group.

The Kwiek dynasty was something totally new in Gypsy history. It was closely related to the ideas about an independent state, *Romanestan* (land of the Roma). Initiatives were taken in search for territory for the state. In 1934 the newly elected Gypsy king Jozef Kwiek sent a delegation to the United Nations to ask for land in Southern Africa (namely Namibia) so the Gypsies could have their own state there. At the same time the "alternative" king Michal II Kwiek traveled to India in order to specify the location of the future Gypsy state (somewhere along the shores of the river Ganges). After his trip he began to support the idea that the state should be in Africa (namely Uganda) and traveled to Czechoslovakia and England to seek support for his idea. In 1936 the next king, heir to Joseph, Janusz Kwiek, sent a delegation to

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<sup>11</sup> Ficowski, *Cyganie*, 88-107.

<sup>12</sup> Colocci, *Gli Zingari*, 33-66, see here also included map showing the itineraries of King Sindel, Duke Mihali, Duke Andrash and Duke Panuel.

<sup>13</sup> Ficowski, *Cyganie*, 46-59; for archival documents of nomination of Gypsy Kings in Polish Commonwealth see: Mroz, *Dzieje Cyganow*, 437-462.

Mussolini asking for some land in Abyssinia (at that time occupied by Italy) where the Gypsies could have their own state.<sup>14</sup>

The birth of the idea about an independent Gypsy state was inspired by several factors stemming from the internal differences in the Gypsy community. It originated among the “new Gypsies” who scattered in many countries not too long ago, including the most respected group of the Kelderara. These groups are not tied to a specific country; they are scattered in various countries and often move from one country to another without breaking their kinship connections. They are searching for their place in the new modern society without being tied to a specific and already existing nation. Launching the Gypsy kings ideas increases their social prestige among the surrounding population, the authorities and the other Gypsy groups. It is only logical that the relatively numerous subgroups of Polska [Polish] Roma, more or less integrated in the Polish nation, show no interest in the idea about an independent Gypsy state, which is actively supported by some of the big Kelderara families in Hungary, France and Spain.<sup>15</sup> We should not ignore the influence of the surrounding population on these processes. They might have also been influenced (as an example to follow) by the Zionist ideas for the creation of the State of Israel, which were especially popular in Poland at the time.<sup>16</sup>

It is a little known fact that the idea of an independent Gypsy state developed rapidly during W.W. II in Nazi Germany. It was supported by Heinrich Himmler who, using Robert Ritter’s theory about the “pure” and “impure” (i.e. with non-Gypsy blood) Gypsies, was thinking of creating a little trial state of the “pure Gypsies” (as such were determined only 10% from the whole community). The place for the future state was designed to be in Burgenland, on the border between Austria and Hungary.<sup>17</sup> This idea was not followed by any attempts for its practical implementation; it is only worth mentioning as a historical curiosity.

The representatives of the Kwiek dynasty who emigrated to France after W.W. II carried on the idea of an independent Gypsy state. Michal Kwiek tried to found an experimental Gypsy village near Paris with its own autonomous self-government, supported by the French authorities. The former “great chancellor” Rudolph Kwiek

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<sup>14</sup> Ficowski, *Cyganie*, 101-102; Hancock, *We are the Romani peoples*, 117-118.

<sup>15</sup> Ficowski, *Cyganie*, 91-93.

<sup>16</sup> Tipler, “From nomads”, 61.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, “*Sinti und Roma*”, 35.

proclaimed himself the Gypsy king in Paris in 1946 and later on changed his title to “president of the World Council of the Gypsies”. In 1959 Lionel Rottaru from Rumania, an emigrant to France, proclaimed himself “Supreme head of the Gypsy people” with the title “Vaida Voevod” and founded the organization “World Gypsy Community”. He demanded land near Lyons from the French government where to establish Gypsy villages, he wrote official letters to the UNO demanding territories in Somalia for the Gypsy state and he even issued passports of the future state in the 70’s.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Internationalization

A new type of international unity of the Gypsies from various countries was gradually shaping up in the 70’s of 20th century. After W.W. II a number of Gypsy organizations emerged in Western Europe, which were seeking ways for their unification and attracting Gypsy organizations from Eastern Europe. This unification took place during the First World Gypsy Congress in London in 1971. Studies on the issue usually say that the congress was attended by representatives of 14 countries,<sup>19</sup> but the documents of the congress listed delegates from 8 countries, 2 out of which from Eastern Europe (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia) and observers.<sup>20</sup> The first congress with chairman Slobodan Berberski (Yugoslavia) and secretary non-Gypsy Grattan Puxon (Great Britain) laid the foundations of the International Roma Union (IRU) and chose a flag and Gypsy anthem. The leading concept was the principle of “amaro Romano drom” (our Romani way) and the phrase “our state is everywhere where there are Roma because Romanestan is in our hearts”.<sup>21</sup>

In the 70’s the international Roma movement had very active relations with India. After the first world festival of Gypsy culture in Chandigarh in 1976, together with Gypsy representatives from 26 countries (as reported in respective studies, we however have some doubts about the accuracy of this data) a delegation from India attended the second world congress in Geneva in 1978. The congress declared that India was the “mother-country” of the Roma and began to work for the acceptance of

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<sup>18</sup> Liegeois, *Roma*, 250; Hancock, *We are the Romani people*, 119-120; see also interview with Vaida Voevod III in: Ackovic, *Nacia smo*, 43-45.

<sup>19</sup> According earlier information the congress was attended by representatives of 21 countries, see: Acton / Klimova, “The Interantional Romani Union”. 158.

<sup>20</sup> Kenrick, “The World Romani Congress”, 107-108.

<sup>21</sup> Liegeois, *Roma*, 257; Ackovic, *Nacia smo*, 98-100.

IRU in world organizations. In 1997 IRU received consultation status in the UNO in the NGO category. A new leadership of IRU was elected with president Dr. Jan Cibula (immigrant from Czechoslovakia) and secretary Shaip Yusuf (Yugoslavia).<sup>22</sup>

The next congress of IRU took place in Göttingen in 1981. It was attended by representatives from 22 countries (mostly from Western Europe, like the previous congresses). This was the only IRU congress, which was attended not only by Roma but by Sinti as well. Moreover, a Sinti representative (Romani Rose) entered the new leadership. Sait Balic (Yugoslavia) was the president, Romani Rose (Germany) was the vice-president and Rajko Djuric (Yugoslavia)<sup>23</sup> was secretary. After the congress the activities of IRU became practically non-existent until the end of the cold war and the changes in Eastern Europe after 1989. Only events took place, mostly in Yugoslavia, such as the big congress in Sarajevo in 1986, which was dedicated to Roma language and culture.

On the whole the development of IRU during this time and the predominant concepts about the future of the Roma were more or less influenced by various factors. The first congress of IRU was organized with the ardent support of civic active scholars and amateurs who were interested in Roma culture and history. Some of them (Grattan Puxon) even joined the leadership of the new organization, but were ousted at the subsequent congresses, others remained connected to the Roma movement, helping them in a different manner (as interpreters between the different Gypsy communities who speak different languages or dialects of Romanes). The second congress of IRU was organized with the support of Evangelical churches working among the Gypsies, the Pentecostal church in particular. Later on the different Evangelical churches lost interest in the world Romani movement though they are still active among the Gypsies. The third congress of IRU was organized by a non-governmental organization (The Association for Threatened Peoples). This was the beginning of the influence of a powerful factor which grew with time – the NGOs, mostly (but not all) human rights ones, whose main target are the Gypsies.

All studies of the international Romani movement so far have ignored a little known factor – the influence of some state policies on a global scale, which exceed

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<sup>22</sup> Liegeois, *Roma*, 258.

<sup>23</sup> Relatively complete documentation of the 3 congress of IRU is stored at SFB 586 “Differenz und Integration” office in Leipzig; see also: Rishi “Report of the Third World”, 43-80.

the respective state and seek international results. The first stages of development of the Romani movement were mostly influenced by the policy of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslavian delegations to the first three congresses were financed by the state and were the most numerous and most active ones, which was the reason for the predominance of Yugoslavian Roma in IRU leadership. The president of the first world Gypsy congress was Slobodan Berberski, a hero in the anti-fascist resistance movement and member of the Central Committee of the Union of Yugoslavian Communists. Some participants in the first congress recall that one of the main tasks of the newly created world Roma organization was to spread the example of Yugoslavia all over the world as a model state in its Roma policy. The red colour on the Romani flag was proposed by Slobodan Berberski as symbol of communism<sup>24</sup> and was accepted at the beginning only conditional: "A red fire, wheel or thin stripe could be added in individual countries if desired."<sup>25</sup> Yugoslavia's support for the international Romani movement was constant and had many forms even influencing the contacts of the movement with India. In 1976 Prime minister Indira Gandhi received the Roma delegation to Chandigarh and the meeting was made possible through the channels of the Yugoslavian Foreign Ministry and the Movement of Independent States where India and Yugoslavia had leading positions.<sup>26</sup> The influence of Yugoslavia on the international Romani movement ended with the Fourth congress of IRU in Warsaw in 1990 which was suspected to have been unofficially financed by the Yugoslavian state (in any case until now, a clear answer to the question who had financed this congress is not available). The congress elected Rajko Djuric as its new president and Emil Scuka (Czechoslovakia) as its Secretary General.

#### 4. *The International Roma Union*

The fourth congress of IRU in Warsaw was an important stage in the development of the international Roma movement.<sup>27</sup> According different sources Roma representatives from 18, 20, 24 or 28 countries attended the congress.<sup>28</sup> An important presence was the great number of Roma from Eastern Europe. The majority of Roma

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<sup>24</sup> Ackovic. *Nacia smo*, 100.

<sup>25</sup> Kenrick, "The World", 105.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communications with the participants.

<sup>27</sup> From this period our source of information are personal observations and/or conversations with the participants, see also: Rishi, "IV World Romani", 3-15, 61.

<sup>28</sup> Liegeios, *Roma*, 259, Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary*, 182.

live in Eastern Europe and during socialist times a new Roma elite was formed in these countries, more or less distant from the Roma in Western Europe. The influx of this fresh power gave new dimensions to the international Roma movement. After the congress the center of the Roma movement made a definite shift to Central and Eastern Europe and it was here, in the new environment after the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the so-called socialist system, that the fundamental ideas about the development of the Roma community were born and continued to develop.

Among the materials approved by the Fourth Congress of IRU of interest to us is the concept that the Roma are citizens of the countries they live in and at the same time they have to look for their own place in the future united Europe. The first part of this concept was determined by the relatively higher degree of social integration of the Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe, while the second part is a response to the trends for future development of these countries and their aspiration to become part of the new Euro-Atlantic realia.

The process of searching for a place for the Gypsies in European integration saw the emergence of the concept of the Roma as a *trans[border]-national minority*.<sup>29</sup> This concept was introduced for the first time at the meeting in Ostia near Rome (Italy) in 1991.<sup>30</sup> At that time a lot of hope for improving the social status of the Gypsies and solving their numerous problems in Central and Eastern Europe, which appeared or were aggravated as a result of the hard period of transition, was directed towards international law and the European institutions in particular. When the countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the Framework Convention for national minorities and the Roma were given the status of national minority in most of the countries without any considerable positive changes for them, their disappointment led them to seek new ideas for the development of the Roma community. The concept of the Roma as a “nation without a state” was a logical consequence of these developments.

The concept of the Roma as a nation without a state was suggested and developed in many articles by a non-Roma, Paolo Pietrosanti from Italy, an influential member of the Transradical party.<sup>31</sup> He was co-opted in the IRU leadership (even though it was not very clear how this happens) as early as the mid 90's. After the fifth congress

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<sup>29</sup> Gheorghe / Acton. “Citizens of the world and nowhere”, 54-70.

<sup>30</sup> Proceedings from this meeting see: “Est e ovest”; *Roma, Gypsy, Travellers. East/West*.

of IRU in July 2000 in Prague, this concept became the leading one. According to the organisers the congress was attended by Roma from 39 countries, but in the *International Romani Union* Chapter, as accepted at the Congress, we read that the organisation consists from representatives of 21 countries (Chapter II, Article 3) and the elected parliament is composed by representatives of 32 countries (including Kosovo, perceived as a separate country). The new leaders of the organization were elected - president Emil Ščuka (The Czech Republic) and secretary general Hristo Kyuchukov (Bulgaria).<sup>32</sup>

The program of the future activities of the organization is dedicated to the concept of the Roma as a “nation without a state”. IRU presented itself officially as a leading institution representing the Roma nation before the international institutions, with all the attributes of the nation-state - parliament (legislative power), commissariat (executive power) and Supreme court (juridical power). The leaders of the new organization had the goal to make the position of IRU official before the international institutions, i.e. they were aspiring for the position of an equal member of the world organizations (UNO, UNESCO) and European institutions (The Council of Europe, EU).

All further activities of the IRU leadership were dedicated to this goal. They signed on 4 of April 2001 "Memorandum of understanding and co-operation between IRU and Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs", they met with the heads of state of the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, members of the governments of Italy and Yugoslavia, they attended the meeting of the leaders of the EU in Nice, they opened IRU office (de-facto Transnational Radical Party office) in Brussels, they made official proposal to the Bulgarian president for preparation of joint projects of IRU and the Republic of Bulgaria (i.e. two equal sides) for solving the problems of the Roma.

The concept about the Roma as a nation without a state was not the only one of its kind in the 90's. New ideas entered the public space, some original and some less so. As a matter of fact, the IRU leadership was not so straightforward and rigorous in imposing the “nation without a state concept”. During a meeting with the Indian Minister of Culture in the spring of 2001 they asked for a statute of “people of Indian origin” to be granted to the Roma (the meaning of this from the point of view of

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<sup>31</sup> Pietrosanti. *Project for a non-territorial*.

<sup>32</sup> Detailed account of this congress see: Acton / Klimova, “The International”, 157-219.

international law is hardly understandable by anyone) and even a possibility to receive Indian passports was discussed. The IRU leadership was divided in this purpose - the president Emil Ščuka categorically refused such possibility (with argumentation, that this could give reason to several countries to expulse Gypsies as “foreign citizens”), while the Secretary General Hristo Kyuchukov welcomed it. However, no official steps from Indian site followed and the issue was quickly forgotten.

Not all Gypsies lost the desire for an independent state. For example, in Poland in the beginning of the 90’s many periodicals published the suggestion that Kaliningrad district (the former Königsberg) be given to the Gypsies for their own state. The Bulgarian press quoted Gypsy leaders saying that a Gypsy state can be created in Dobrudja, in the borderland between Rumania and Bulgaria. The Gypsy activist Nicolae Bobu in Rumania, who is also a lawyer, is suing the Rumanian state in order to make a legitimate Gypsy state from a small rural piece of land purchased by several Gypsy families. The representative of Bulgaria in the IRU Parliament after returning home from the congress in Prague, gave a press statement, that one of the decisions of the congress is to create a Roma state “between India and Egypt”.<sup>33</sup>

The most well formed concept is the position of a well-known Roma leader, the head of an international Roma organization, an alternative to IRU. In a number of unofficial comments he situated the future Roma state in Macedonia and outlined long-term strategies for the future geo-political development of the Balkans. During the Kosovo crisis in 1999-2000 numerous rumors were circulating (unofficially) about the preparation of para-military Roma forces “somewhere on the Balkans” (without any real basis).

In the last few years yet another idea about the future of the Roma has emerged - the suggestion to grant them the status of an aboriginal people so that they can preserve and develop their specific culture. When this idea was first heard in academic circles<sup>34</sup> the European Gypsies met it with dismay and regarded it as a bad joke. However, the idea has received unexpected support from overseas from Roma activists in the US and Latin America, mostly Kalderash and groups related to them, whose forefathers came to the new world 2-3 generations ago, united in the pan-

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<sup>33</sup> Romite shte praviat svoia darzhava [Roma will create their own state].

<sup>34</sup> Klimova. “Romani Rights, Indigenous Rights”.

American Romani Alliance *the Council of the Kumpanias and Organisations of the America (SKOKRA)*. As a result, the suggestion to grant the Roma the status of “indigenous people” was included in the declaration “The Roma people: The other son of Pacha Mama – Mother Earth, Continental Meeting of the Roma people of Americas” at the meeting “The Forum of the Americas for Diversity and Plurality” in Quito at 15 of March 2001.<sup>35</sup>

### 5. *The NGO boom*

After 1989 the ideas about the future of the Gypsies were strongly influenced by outside factors, which determined the main trends of its development. The “Roma issue” in Eastern Europe was the main topic of many foundations, all kinds of NGO (human rights at first and then NGOs working in all spheres of life) and recently the programs of European institutions. The “new markets” for these structures in Eastern Europe, especially the clearly profitable “Roma niche” were developed rapidly and the so-called “Gypsy industry” became satiated. This has led to a number of ridiculous situations (e.g. the offer of funding is much higher as could be accumulated from existed NGO’s). This lead also to the emergence of quite a few “professional Roma” (on national and international level), whose solely educational and professional qualification is the Roma origin (often contested by other Roma) and proficiency in English, which appeared to be enough to earn their living as “experts” in NGO sector and in the European institutions).

The “Gypsy industry” is based on two completely opposite and often intersecting and mutually complementing concepts about the Roma. On the one hand, the Roma are viewed as an underclass, a strongly marginalised and socially degraded community, which to a certain extent is socially inadequate (for example, some European programmes classify the Roma not together with other ethnic minorities, but together with disabled people, homosexuals, etc.) Sometimes in the past, and occasionally in the present this theory was and still is supported by some state policies in Central Europe (former Czechoslovakia, Hungary) and by some recent scholar works as well, which premised (quite speculative) on correlation between “poverty”

and “ethnicity”.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand stands the other concept of “Gypsy industry” with its typically exotic vision of the Roma and the popular theses about the specifics of the Roma community and its typical traditional ethnic culture, which makes them completely different from the non-Gypsies and makes them unable to participate equally in the life of the countries, where they are living.<sup>37</sup>

The common element between the two theses (which, only at first glance, look absolute contradictory) is that both recognize the need for a specific approach towards the Gypsies, different from approach towards the members of the majority population and even from other minorities. Thus special programs and projects in order to work with them are needed. Otherwise, if the Roma are perceived as people like any other, a “normal” ethnic community like many such communities in Europe, or a differentiated part of the respective nation in whose country they live, the initiatives of the “Gypsy industry” (in its NGO or/and Euro-bureaucrat parameters) will lose most of their targets.

The “Gypsy industry” has been more cautious as far as the “nation without a state” concept is concerned because of the ambitions of IRU (and other similar international Roma organisations) to become the legitimate representative of the Roma community and take control over all funding for the Roma in Eastern Europe. This excludes the role of the NGO as a go-between and deprives them of working space and created difficulties in front of European Programs (on first place with the logical question “who is the legitimate representative of the Roma community?”).

An extremely important factor for promoting of the concept of the Roma as a “nation without a state”, was the state policy of Czech Republic and in particular the activities of the Czech Foreign Ministry. The Czech Republic provided most of the funding of the Fifth Congress of IRU in Prague. The congress was attended by the Czech Foreign Minister (and not representatives of the state institutions working on the problems of Czech Roma). Moreover, all further work of the IRU leadership was financed and assisted by the Czech Foreign Ministry. The visits of the president of IRU to many countries and his meetings with government officials (including presidents) were arranged along diplomatic channels.

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<sup>36</sup> Emigh / Fodor / Szelenyi. “The Racialisation”, 1-32; Ladanyi. “The Hungarian”, 67-82. For polemic with this see: Stewart, “Deprivation, the Roma”, 133-156.

<sup>37</sup> For the most recent example of this approach see: Braham & Braham “Romani Migrations and EU”, 47-62.

This policy of the Czech Republic was in some extent logical. The Czech Gypsies were almost completely annihilated during W.W. II and now the Roma living there are immigrants from Slovakia, their children and grandchildren. After the separation between the Czech Republic and Slovakia these Roma are no longer historically bound to the Czech nation. A few years from now when the Czech Republic expects to become a full-fledged member of the EU, the Roma as an “European nation without a state” will be able to choose where to live in the new broader European boundaries (i.e. it was expected that they will leave Czech Republic and will prefer to live in more wealthy West European countries).

A document of the Czech Foreign Ministry, whose existence became known through unofficial channels, confirms these speculations. This document underlines “the Europeanisation of the Roma issue” as the main goal of the Czech policy regarding the Roma. It discusses in detail how to assist IRU and what are the respective duties of the Czech diplomats abroad, especially those in Central Europe, where they should convince the neighboring countries to adapt Czech model in regard to Roma problem.<sup>38</sup>

After the election in 2002 and composing of a new government in the Czech Republic this state support of IRU ostensible ceased. The role of Czech Republic as a state, which provide financial and lobby support for the Roma movement (but yet not only IRU) was taken by Finland. We could only speculate about the reasons for this policy of Finland, but not the last factor of significance is the fear from emigration of Gypsies from Eastern Europe (the cases of Roma asylum from Slovakia seekers in Finland lead to rapid changes in the emigrational legislative there) as well as the wish to demonstrate successfulness of Finland’s model of solving the Roma problems.

With the support of Finland, and under patronage of its President Ms. Tarja Halonen, after several meetings of Roma activists with representatives of European institutions, at the 1st of October 2002, the creation of the pan-European Roma Advisory Body at the Parliamentary assembly of Council of Europe – the European Roma Forum was officially recommended.<sup>39</sup> At the current stage this idea is in process of discussing and lobbying, without real results.

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<sup>38</sup> Sobotka. “They have a dream”.

<sup>39</sup> The European Roma Forum.

The question whether this development will continue in direction towards “Roma as a nation without a state” remains open. In the documents concerning establishment of European Roma Forum the notion “Roma nation” is not mentioned. The summarising description “Roma – different groups, similar experiences of discrimination” is used instead”.<sup>40</sup> It is not very likely that this could be a criteria on which a nation could be constituted, because of its vague character – lot of the social (and not ethnic ones) formations could be defined in this way. The hope of some Roma activists to receive official recognition of Roma as a nation without a state in the frames of European structures by attaching the European Roma Forum to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe is barely realistic.

It is indicative, that in the process of creation of European Roma Forum IRU gives up the leading position to the alternative international organisation Roma National Congress (RNC) led by Rudko Kawczynski (Lovara from Poland living in Germany). RNC was the organiser of alternative international “2 World Roma Congress” in the Polish town of Lodz in May 2002, claiming to be a follower of the 1. World Roma congress in 1937 organized by the Kwiek dynasty. RNC is insisting on the “right to cultural difference” and on “join the battle of the other 5000 indigenous peoples and hundred of thousands local traditional communities”.<sup>41</sup>

The ideas of the Roma nation are constantly developed and sometimes are taking unexpected directions. New development in Roma movement once again gives an evidence for this. The Romani Activists Network on Legal and Political Issues, a Belgian-based federation, offered own interpretation of notion “Roma nation”, limiting it only to the Romani population of the EU member states.<sup>42</sup>

We saw similar approach recently, in the former Soviet Union. In January 2003 in Smolensk, Russia, the Association of Roma Communities of the Baltic Countries and the Commonwealth of Independent States “Amaro Drom” was created. The analysis of the program documents of this new organisation<sup>43</sup> clearly shows, that the idea of Roma nation is the leading one, but this “nation” is understood in frames of the countries of the former Soviet Union, and its leading goals and aims are oriented towards this direction.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.romaworldcongress.org/indexeng.html>.

<sup>42</sup> PER Report. Roma and the Question. p. 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.romanation.da.ru/>.

The congress in Smolensk once again confirms a clear tendency – ambition of “external factors” to determine (according their own interests) the directions in development of Roma movement. The congress in Smolensk was organised with the financial support of the network of Open Society foundations, which is limiting significantly their activities in Central and Eastern Europe and urgently seeks “new markets”. And it is merely natural that the first Welcome letter to the new created organisation was send by European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC –NGO created by the network of Open Society foundations): “The ERRC believes that the creation of the Association of Roma communities of the Baltic countries and the CIS is the first significant step towards a strong Roma rights movement in the CIS and the Baltic states”.<sup>44</sup>

### *6. Remaining problems*

So far we have presented only the evolution of ideas about the Roma nation and state, without discussing in detail how realistic each idea is and how likely it is to materialize. These are all important issues, however, it is much more important to decide how far they are a realistic reflection of the visions and desires of the diverse and internally heterogeneous Gypsy community.

The internal heterogeneity of the Gypsies is quite a serious factor in the Roma community. Some authors even ask the question how realistic is it to use the concept of community (let alone “nation”) for a group of people whose mother tongues are not only the various dialects of Romanes but also Arabic, Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Rumanian, Hungarian, Spanish and others, and quite common are the groups with various preferred (i.e. public declared or even real experienced)<sup>45</sup> different, non-Gypsy ethnic identities. The nation is not only a congregation of groups of people with common origin, it also prerequisite quite a few other parameters and (not at least) the awareness of unity of the community. Sometimes the awareness of community unity in some regions may be absent altogether (or it may exist on lower levels) and the Gypsies may not be aware of the existence of bigger community subdivisions.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.errc.com>.

<sup>45</sup> Marushiakova, *Identity Formation*.

We can summarize by saying that the Gypsies as a community are rather a social construction united primarily by common historical origin and by the attitude of the surrounding population, who treat them as “Gypsies” (or other equivalent names). It is only as a consequence that other elements of a “real community” are built, especially intensive nowadays. This building, however is in its initial phase, in spite of the efforts of some international leaders to present it as a fulfilled process. The attempts to direct this development from “up to down” with support of various factors outside the community till now does not give any significant results in regards of Roma community itself.

Actually the idea of Roma nation is perceived predominantly as an instrument, not as an aim and that is why some Roma international activists are trying to consider different patterns of constructing this nation, dependant on the expected results. There is no agreement in regards of the fundamental question – should this idea direct the different Gypsy communities in the direction of unification (towards one unitary Roma nation) or Roma nation should be an open structure, an alliance of different communities bound together by common problems, caused by the attitudes of surrounding populations.<sup>46</sup> Shortly, for the international Roma strategists, it is not decided how should Gypsy communities develop – as “ethno-nation”, as “civic nation” or as “cultural nation”, that is why they are also looking for other variants, such as “political nation” or “cultural nation.”<sup>47</sup>

The Gypsies, whether they perceive their community as a real one or quasi-community, are not united even on the level of terminology. One of the main decisions of the First Congress supposedly was the official use of the name “Roma” for all Gypsies worldwide.<sup>48</sup> This is more or less wishful thinking on a global scale. A big headway has been made in public speaking in a number of countries (mostly in Europe) where it has become politically incorrect to use a name other than “Roma” (even when it is not a question of Roma). This name has been officially accepted by some (but not all) international institutions, again mostly in Europe. The Roma activists put a lot of efforts to endorse this appellation of the community, which also lead to some scandal and odd situations, e.g. at UN World Conference Against

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<sup>46</sup> PER Report. Roma and the Question, 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 25.

<sup>48</sup> However this decision was no fixed in any written document and is not reflected in articles, written of that time. Also the memories of participants in this congress differ, some argued that such decision was made, others deny it.

Racism in Durban, South Africa in summer 2001 the Roma delegates pressed the representatives of Scottish and Irish Travellers to declare themselves as Roma in order to be able to sign common declaration.

However, the non-Roma Gypsy communities usually reject the name “Roma” or accept it with compromise. For example, the official name in Germany is “Sinti und Roma” and the representatives of the Sinti have attended only the Göttingen congress out of all IRU congresses. Their attendance there was very pragmatic, it served to make legitimate in front of the German government the organization “Union of German Sinti and Roma” headed by Romani Rose as a representative of all Gypsies, which took an active part in the distribution of aid and compensation for Holocaust victims. Somewhat similar is the approach of representatives of the Spanish Kale and NGOs, who took part in the international Roma movement mostly in order to obtain access to different EU programs, but they were absent from the latest IRU congress in Prague. It is a curious fact that the international Roma movement includes some Kale representatives, while the Roma in Spain, the so-called “Hungaros” are never included in the process. Among the Roma themselves there is no unity regarding the terminology used. In Russia, for example, they prefer the name “Tsygane” [Gypsies], in Hungary there was an inter-group conflict about the name of the national radio - “Radio C” (“C” as in “Ciganyok”) and not “Radio R” (“R” as in “Roma”), in Bulgaria the division is among common “Tsigani” [Gypsies] and Roma - in meaning ‘professional Roma’, etc.

Similar is the situation with the “standardization” of Romanes, the language of the Roma, who are the main part of Gypsy communities. The language standardization was discussed already at the First Roma congress and it was a key point at the Warsaw Congress (where Marcel Korthiade passed a congress decision to use his own, special constructed for this purpose alphabet). The real results from the “standardization” until now are negligible. Romanes is being taught in very limited degree, mainly as additional subject in some countries in Eastern Europe. Only in Rumania the alphabet approved by Warsaw Congress is in use. Other countries use their own variations according to the local writing norms. Quite a few publications in Romanes appeared, although written with different alphabets (variations of Latin, Cyrillic and even Greek) and in different dialects, which are often incomprehensible by Roma from other communities or in other countries. In the limited circle of the so-

called “international Roma” appeared something like “lingua franca” in oral form, which is a mixture of different dialects. This language is used at International meetings, but however this is only a beginning of development of real standardized, commonly accepted literary Roma language and the possible end of this process is in the vast future.

Probably the solely idea, which more or less unites the activists from the International Roma Movement is the Holocaust. From 70’s onwards they constantly raised the issue of compensating the Gypsies as victims of W.W. II. and link their extermination during the Holocaust with the present persecution, and are using the history of Holocaust to strength the Roma identity and unity.<sup>49</sup> National historical mythology about the Gypsies/Roma as “eternal victim” during their whole history is developed in the works of some Roma activists,<sup>50</sup> although as an ideological concept, it gained followers only in very limited circle of Gypsy intellectuals. Most discussions in the frames of international Roma movements however, are not about the ideological concept, but pragmatically about the compensation of victims and survivors of Holocaust, distribution of this money, and so on.

Shortly, the concept of the Roma as a “nation without a state” and IRU (or other international Roma organisation) as their official representative is well established only among a relatively restricted circle of the so-called “international Roma” activist in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The main problems facing any international Roma organisation are its legitimacy and representation. i.e. can its members be considered as representatives of the Roma from the countries they claim to represent. A relatively small number of Gypsies worldwide, including Eastern Europe, know about the existence of IRU, RNC or other similar organisations and its right to represent the Roma, and they are even less interested in its activities.

The people contesting the legitimacy of IRU and its right to represent the Roma use the argument that the congresses of the organization are constituted by the people who attend them, i.e. all who wish to attend and whose travel expenses are often funded by “external factors” (the state or a foundation). Actually, individuals, who grow up as Roma activists in middle of NG sector are presented as leaders of the community on one hand, and on the other hand, democratically elected in their own

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<sup>49</sup> Kapralski, “Identity”, 280.

<sup>50</sup> Hancock. *Pariah syndrome*.

countries representatives of the Roma, are usually absent from IRU. In the last few years many countries in Eastern Europe (Macedonia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Czech Republic and Latvia) have had dozens of Roma Parliament members (present or past), elected through Roma parties or in the mainstream political parties. There are also dozens and even hundreds of Roma in different levels of the local governments. Despite the many faults of the widely advertised “Roma self-government” in Hungary, it is based on democratic elections (representatives from Hungary did not attend the latest IRU congress in Prague).

Huge majority of these Roma representatives, who have somehow become legitimate, do not become part of the international Roma movement, which includes mostly activists of the NGO sector or as their opponents often call them “professional Roma” from the “Gypsy industry” area. They try to gain influence and positions among the Roma in their own countries through the international organizations.

In this respect the already mentioned Finland initiative to establish European Roma and Travellers Forum in Strasbourg as a “representative body of Roma population in Europe” is indicative. In order to be transnational and national representative it should be composed as follows: Fifteen (15) delegates are nominated by the Roma National Congress; Fifteen (15) delegates are nominated by the International Romani Union; One (1) delegate is nominated from each confession and/or pan-European tribe; One (1) delegate is nominated from Romany political parties having elected representatives at the local, regional or national level and/or elected Roma in mainstream political parties. Two (2) delegates (one male, one female) are nominated from Roma national non-governmental organisations and/or umbrella NGOs from each member state having a population of Roma.<sup>51</sup>

During the spring of 2004 new member states from Central and Eastern Europe (Czech republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland) joined European Union. In this countries live a huge Gypsy population and correspondingly a big number of Roma activists. At the Conference ‘Roma in an Enlarged European Union’ organised by the European Commission (DG Enlargement – DG Employment and Social Affairs) in April 2004 in Brussels, Belgium many problems were discussed and different ways for integration of the Roma were outlined, but the question of Roma nation has not been risen by anyone.

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<sup>51</sup> European Roma and Travellers Forum.

We should not be surprised by the weak influence of the various concepts (described above) among the Gypsies on a global scale or among the Roma alone within Europe and North America. We have already talked about the heterogeneity of the Gypsy community, but there are other, maybe more powerful factors at play, determined by the social conditions in the countries where the Roma live, the positions they have in the respective society and most of all by the extent of integration in society.

In view of the above it would be sufficient to give only one example about the education of related Roma groups. The main principle of the Roma living in the US is to keep the young people away from school as long as possible in order not to have them lose their traditional ethnic culture and identity. They claim that they would agree to send their children to special schools for the Roma. The Roma of Eastern Europe are fighting against the actually segregated schools with predominantly Roma children and for equal education of Gypsy children in “normal” mixed schools. There was a campaign in the Czech Republic against sending Roma children to schools for the mentally retarded and in Bulgaria there is an ongoing process of desegregation of Gypsy schools based on the territorial principle.

From the point of view of social positions we see examples of total discrepancies between Gypsies from the East and Gypsies from the West. For example, in on-line discussions on the international Roma Internet networks during the Kosovo crisis, the Western Gypsies were unable to understand why the Roma in Kosovo and former Yugoslavia were so involved in a non-Roma war and how it concerned them until Gypsies became victims of the conflict and now the major part of them are refugees or displaced persons, without any real hope to return safely to their home places.

We can outline two general patterns of the attitude of the Roma towards their place in society and the perspectives for their development (including a Roma nation without a state or even state-nation) – the Western and the Eastern pattern.

The Eastern pattern is predominant mostly in Eastern Europe where the Roma on the whole would like to be accepted and treated as an integral part of the respective nation among whom they live. The Roma in these countries have lived settled with the surrounding population for centuries, they consider themselves equal citizens of the respective nation-states and do not have any particular desire for national segregation. This is not an aspiration for voluntary assimilation, though some Roma

have chosen to pursue this goal. The Roma (or at least the vast majority) would like to preserve and develop their ethnic culture but they do not feel the need to become a new “nation without a state”. It may sound strange but it is a fact that absolutely all Roma activists in Bulgaria do not wish to see the word “integration” used in state policy. They repeatedly stated in public: “we have lived in this country for centuries and we are integrated...”

The difference between the two models of attitudes of the Roma towards their place in the society reflect even if speaking about their origin. Recently, the supporters of the “Western” model started to revise Roma history. According the new interpretations Roma are from noble origin. They are inheritors of the Rajputs (“sons of princes”) warriors, who left India around 11th century.<sup>52</sup> In contrary, the Gypsies in Eastern Europe in their historical search (most often on folklore level) always try to proof that Roma are very ancient local population, often their participation in creating of the specific state is stressed (i.e. they perceived themselves as part of the specific nation and want to proof this through means of the history).<sup>53</sup>

As a matter of fact, the idea of Roma nation is perceived from the major part of Roma activists in Eastern Europe as a possibility to improve their situation in their own countries with the help of external factors, i.e. to recognize Roma as a nation without a state in order to became parts of respective nation in countries where they are living.

This Eastern pattern is based on an old historical tradition. It did not originate during the socialist era, though the socialist period had a considerable contribution to its establishment. We would like to mention the fact that when the Fifth IRU Congress officially proposed the concept of the Roma as a “nation without a state”, the Roma from Greece reacted most violently. The media published a number of statements by Roma leaders and in the spring of 2001 a special declaration was accepted signed by Panhellenic Federation of Greek Roma Associations (who encompass “70 legitimate representatives of 19 Gypsy Associations from all over Greece”) who adamantly declared that they did not wish the Roma to be treated as a “nation without a state” or a “national minority”, since they are part of the Greek

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<sup>52</sup> Hancock, *We are the Romani people*, 6-16.

<sup>53</sup> Marushiakova. *Identity*; Marushiakova, E. / Popov, V. “Myth as process”.

nation.<sup>54</sup> We can laugh at the fact that a non-Roma organization contradicted the declaration with a number of statements claiming that it was not representative of the Roma community of Greece and that the true representatives of the Roma community was the same human rights NGO.

The pattern of attitude of Western Roma towards their place in society and the perspectives of their development is most clearly expressed in Roma (mostly Kelderara and their related groups) whose forefathers emigrated to the respective countries two or three generations ago. They are not well integrated in the nation-states where they live (they change their residence quite often) and they are subjects rather than citizens of the countries. Unlike them, the local, “old-time” local Gypsies (Sinti, Manush, Romanitchells, Kale) are integrated to a certain extent (due to historical reasons their integration is much less compared to the Roma in Eastern Europe) and they do not particularly support the concept of a community outside the social structure (more specifically a nation without a state).

The idea to view the Roma as a very specific community with a special status (sometimes almost equal to the status of “indigenous population”) is mostly supported by various “external factors” in the international Roma movement. Among the Gypsy population this approach is mostly supported by the “professional Roma”, who have actively been working in the last few years for the “Gypsy industry” in the NGO-sector and in European programs or who work to endorse certain state policies. It is often pointed out their opponents from Gypsy milieu, that among this category of Roma leaders many are emigrants, Roma from mixed origin or even persons whose ethnic origin is controversial. In other words, often these persons are marginal from point of view of the Gypsy community and leading motif of their activities is to receive a recognition in the middle of their Roma community.

It is hard to say what are the perspectives of the development of the Roma as a community in the context of rapid globalisation and it is equally hard to tell whether and when they will ever become a Roma “nation without a state”. Our opinion is that things should be left to follow their natural course of development. From a historical point of view “the export of a revolution”, or in a broader sense the imposition of

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<sup>54</sup> Greek Roma Leaders Lash Out at International Romani Union: “No to the Demand for Recognition as Nation Without a State AIM Athens, August 6, 2000”. Information distributed

ideas in the midst of a community, which is not yet developed to the level necessary for their acceptance has always been unsuccessful with rather tragic consequences. The dozens examples of failure of the various “civilizing policies” are still visible today in many parts of the world and not only in the Third World.

It may sound paradoxical if we say that we feel that the real danger for the future of the Gypsies are not so much racism, the anti-Gypsy moods and actions, or the negative stereotypes, but the active interference and constant patronizing of people who love the Gypsies (or at least claim so) and in their desire to help them, they impose on the Gypsies patterns of development which they consider the best. This interference in the guise of social patronage, irrespective of the subjective intentions of its participants (idealistic or mercantile), in the long run only kills the natural mechanisms of community preservation, thus turning the community into a constant social customer of professional benefactors and finally killing the perspectives for its natural development. Nevertheless we would like to hope that the Gypsies will manage to pass through the Scilla of becoming marginal to society (leading to desocialising) and the Herbides of being an exotic attraction (leading to social segregation) and find the true ways for their normal development, lean predominantly on their own strength and on the internal resources of their community.

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