

State Policies under Communism

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General Framework and Specific Features | Sedentarisation of Itinerant Roma | Speed up Integration | Cultural and Historical Heritage | Organisations – The “Romani Movement” in Yugoslavia | Public Integration and/or Assimilation

➤ *The end of the Second World War saw the emergence of what was officially called the “Socialist Bloc” over a large part of Europe, where a considerable number of European Roma lived. In line with the new communist ideology, overall social and economic changes took place in these countries, affecting the entire population, Roma included. In spite of the common ideological parameters, the policies towards “Gypsies” were not identical, there were differences, based on models from the past and on national strategies. The main aim of the policies of the states was integration into society, which in some countries reached the stage of striving towards assimilation.*

INTRODUCTION

The end of the Second World War and the subsequent years brought radical change to the countries of Eastern Europe. Local communist parties came to power in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Albania with the active support of the Soviet Union and established full control in all spheres of public life. A new type of state-political system was established, which according to its own phraseology, was defined as “socialist”. Overall social and economic changes were carried out, some of them directly concerned with “Gypsies”, who in various degrees and in different periods were also a target of active government policy.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK AND SPECIFIC FEATURES

When the so-called “Socialist Bloc” in Eastern Europe is talked about, one frequently gets the impression that this term refers to a monolithic totalitarian system, directly under Moscow rule, where a common policy dominated in all spheres. To a certain extent this was the case, yet quite a lot of differences

and specific features in the separate countries remained. The monolithic unity of the countries in Eastern Europe, ruled by communist parties broke up as early as the late 1940s in Yugoslavia. In the 1950s Albania also set out on its own course. In spite of remaining a member of the Warsaw Treaty and Comecon, Romania in many aspects demonstrated – to a smaller extent – a certain “independence”. Within certain nuances, this also emerged in the re-

COMMUNIST EUROPE

III. 1

Countries that have been governed entirely on communist principles

EAST GERMANY

POLAND

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

HUNGARY

ROMANIA

YUGOSLAVIA

BULGARIA

ALBANIA

U.S.S.R

maining countries of Eastern Europe. [III. 1]

In fact it is not possible to speak of the existence of some kind of general model for the countries of Eastern Europe especially in the sphere of internal national policy. On the surface, on the ideological level, there was total unity, and each country declared that its national policy was based on the “principles of Marxism-Leninism”; nevertheless in practice matters were quite different.



III. 2
Coppersmith, Romania, in 1956.
(by G. Lükö, from Fraser 1992, p. 280)



III. 3
Ursari (bear trainer), Bulgaria.
(by Rolf Bauerdick, from Guy 2001, p. 328)



III. 4
Charcoal makers, Bulgaria.
(by Rolf Bauerdick, from Guy 2001, p. 328)



III. 5
Metal traders from Meteol, Romania.
(from Djurić / Becken / Bengsch 1996, p. 184b)



III. 6
Horse trader, Romania.
(from Djurić / Becken / Bengsch 1996, p. 184b)



III. 7
Brickmakers from Craiova, Romania.
(from Djurić / Becken / Bengsch 1996, p. 184b)

Most generally speaking there were two models of national policy in Eastern Europe, which could be defined as “ethno-national” and as “post-imperial”. The former dominated in Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania (Czechoslovakia could also be included in this group albeit with some reservations – it was a federal state, made up of two countries). These countries constituted one nation (in Czechoslovakia two) which was the basis of the formation of a “nation state” and “mino-

rities” (the remaining smaller communities, whatever the terms which are used to define them in the various countries). The second model (“post-imperial”) is typical for the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Here, at least officially, there was no “main” nation nor minorities, but a complex hierarchical structure of national/ethnic communities with or without their own state/administrative formations, unified in a new, “higher” type of formation – “the Soviet people” and “Yugoslavs”.

The different approaches of state policy towards Roma in the countries of Eastern Europe, however, do not mean that we cannot identify any common principles, regularities and models. These common characteristics of a state policy towards Roma, whatever the differences and specifics in their realisation, are indicative in general for Roma in Eastern Europe over a fixed period (between the end of the Second World War and the “wind of change” from the end of the 1980s onwards).

SEDENTARISATION OF ITINERANT ROMA

Sedentarisation of Roma is a typical example of the combination of common and specific policies within state

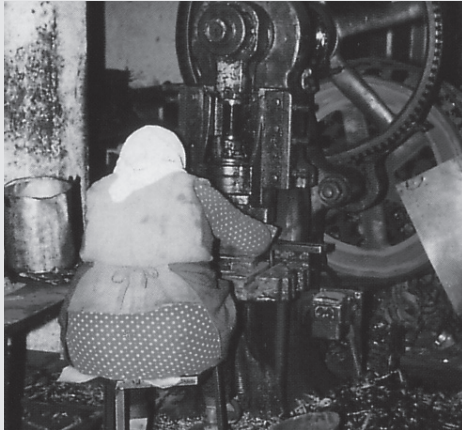
policies in Eastern European countries. What is common in this case, is that processes of sedentarisation (or at least significant limiting of nomadism) of itinerant Roma were unfolding throughout the examined period in the whole of Eastern Europe. These processes in

the individual countries, however, have their own peculiarities in the forms of state policies that directed them and differences in the time of their realisation.

The starting points of the processes of sedentarisation in the coun-

In some eastern European regions Roma still work in professions which do not require a permanently fixed abode. Itinerant crafts to a certain extent have outlived the measures of the communist regimes to make the Roma sedentary and the general trend towards sedentarisation. Up to the present day, for example, there are bear trainers, presenting their animals to the tourists on the Black Sea coast, and horse dealers.

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III. 9

“In Hungary, there is a small number of blacksmith cooperatives which are run by Roma on their own behalf. The blacksmith cooperative of Nogradmegyer, for instance, has existed since 1951. The village had been inhabited by Gypsy nailsmiths and musicians, both groups through a long process established the cooperative, which today produces a multiplicity of products.”

(translated from Gronemeyer / Rakelmann 1988, p. 121f.;

III 8. *ibid.* p. 138)

SEDENTARISATION OF NOMADS: REPRESSION OR ASSISTANCE?

No doubt the question of how the issue of sedentarisation of nomads in Eastern Europe is seen today is interesting. In many scientific and human rights publications this policy is seen as the peak of the communist parties' repressive policies towards the Roma. This view is also shared by some present day Roma activists, who, however, come from Roma groups, which have been settled for centuries. Generally speaking, in Eastern Europe the Roma themselves and especially the former travelling Roma have a positive attitude towards the measures towards sedentarisation. These are best expressed by those who lived through the events. The positive attitude is stronger for instance in Bulgaria or in the countries of the former Soviet Union, than in Czechoslovakia and Poland, where sedentarisation was accompanied by repressive measures (confiscation of horses and property).

Another factor is much more important when we assess the policy of sedentarisation of nomadic Roma. During the period from the 1950s to the 1970s in countries of Eastern Europe a serious crisis had begun to affect the nomadic way of life. Due to changing social and economic conditions the nomads themselves had to look for opportunities to settle down (or to lead a semi-nomadic way of life) and new economic strategies. The active interference of the state came at an appropriate historical moment (which is a rare event in the history of state policies towards the Roma) and substantially assisted in the natural development of the community and its integration (for example through the provision of loans and subsidies for building dwellings).

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tries of Eastern Europe also differ to great extent. Of course it is impossible to cite precise data, however we can assume that over 3/4 of the Roma in Poland and at least 2/3 of the total Roma population in the Soviet Union were (semi-)nomads. At the other end were Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, where itinerant Roma, subject to government policy were fewer than 5% of the total Roma population. In the remaining countries the relative share of nomadic Roma varied, i.e. in Romania and Yugoslavia the itinerant Roma were not more than 1/3, and in Hungary and Albania not more than 1/4 of the total number of Roma.

In most Eastern European countries sedentarisation of the nomadic Roma was done by virtue of a government act or a party decision (which was one and the same). The Soviet Union,

where a special law banned an itinerant way of life, was the first country to undertake an active policy for resolving the “problem” of nomadic Roma. On October 5, 1956, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree on “The inclusion of itinerant Gypsies in labour activities”. The same model was applied in Bulgaria, where a decree on “The resolution of the issues of the Gypsy minority in Bulgaria” was adopted by the Council of Ministers in 1958. In Czechoslovakia a law on “Settlement of itinerant persons” was passed in the same year; the differences are essentially insignificant. In Poland, after the unsuccessful attempt of the government to persuade itinerant Roma to settle voluntarily in the free western territories (after the deportation of the German population) in 1952, the Ministry of the Interior

issued a resolution on the obligatory sedentarisation of itinerant “Gypsies” in 1964. In Romania special measures towards the sedentarisation of itinerant “Gypsies” began after 1977 when the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party adopted a programme for their social integration. In this programme sedentarisation is one of the issues addressed, however not the most important one.

In the remaining Eastern European countries sedentarisation of the nomadic Roma was not regulated by any special policy towards them, rather it ran within the framework of the general legislation (the requirement for a fixed place of residence, a fixed work place etc). In Hungary this process took place during the second half of the 50s, and in Albania and Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s.

POLAND: EFFECTS OF COMPULSORY SETTLEMENT

“When enforcing settlement [in 1964] the authorities simply neglected to prepare any plans to enable Roma to start a new life. There were no decent flats for them, no employment and nothing that would enable them to adjust gradually to wider society and to change their previous living patterns. Where they were allocated council flats among “ordinary people”, conflicts soon appeared. [...] In the years that followed, after the Roma had been sufficiently discouraged from resuming their travels, the authorities virtually lost interest in them. This was when Romani patterns of adjusting to their new lives were established. The Roma took to dealing in foreign currency and valuables - mainly gold, cars, antiques and carpets. Those who had relatives abroad had more opportunities for making a living by smuggling goods or selling cars stolen in Western countries.”

Ill. 11 (from Mróz 2001, pp. 257f.)



Ill. 12

“Gypsy best-workers of socialist labour”. Sofia, end of the 1940s, in the middle Shakir Pashov, then MP in Bulgaria.
(from the archives of Studii Romani, Sofia, Bulgaria)

It should be noted that the state policies towards sedentarisation of the nomadic Roma did not always lead to the desired results. In the Soviet Union part of the Roma, who officially had settled, continued with their old way of life up to the 1960s when they gradually began to turn to new economic

activities. The itinerant way of life is generally dying out (however not entirely disappearing) with most of the Roma in Yugoslavia. In Bulgaria several Roma groups, in spite of owning a dwelling and nominally having regular employment, continue to travel during the warmer seasons (which was the tra-

ditional model for the nomadic way of life in the Balkans). The policy of sedentarisation had the poorest results in Romania, where in 1977 the census officially declared 66,500 nomadic Roma and where the model of seasonal nomadism has survived to this day in various Roma groups. [Ills. 2-10]

SPEED UP INTEGRATION

The policy directed towards the public integration of Roma dominated in all Eastern European countries, its realisation had a variety of forms, however. There are two different approaches, which are both topical to this day: the “mainstream one” and the “special one”. The “mainstream approach” is lacking a special state measures for social integration of Roma, which means that Roma are treated within the framework of the existing mainstream policies towards the whole population. The “special approach” treats Roma as a separate community with specific problems, which presuppose specific measures for their resolution.

The first approach is typical above all for the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Poland and Albania where there are no

special government programmes for Roma (in the USSR and Poland there is one exception – the programme for sedentarisation of itinerants). The only sphere of public life, where the principle of a mainstream policy towards Roma was not applied, was the preservation and development of their ethno-cultural identity. The Roman Theatre in the USSR was one of the most famous sights of Moscow; there were over 100 Roma musical and dance ensembles, under various institutions, and Roma music was recorded and had a very large circulation, together with “Gypsy” folklore. The situation in Yugoslavia, with the active support of the state, is similar. The situation is somewhat similar in Poland, although on a more limited scale. [Ill. 11]

In the remaining four countries (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) a “special” approach in the state policy for the public integra-

tion of Roma was prevailing. The presence of such an approach does not exclude the “mainstream approach”, and in many cases public integration of Roma took place within the framework of general legislation. However, for special issues the state decided that special measures for Roma were necessary. The sedentarisation policies for Roma were only one of the examples in this respect. [Ill. 14]

In Bulgaria, the “Resolution of the issues of the Gypsy minority in Bulgaria” was adopted in 1958, and followed in 1978 by a decree “On the further improvement of work among Bulgarian Gypsies, for their more active inclusion in the building of the developed socialist society”; the Romanian Communist Party prepared a “Programme for the Social Integration of Gypsies”; and in Czechoslovakia – following the events of 1968 and the adoption of a new constitution – the

“HORSES, COWS AND GYPSIES”

“[The] Government Decree 502/1965 introduced a planned programme for transferring Roma from overcrowded settlements in Slovakia and dispersing them to suitable locations in the Czech lands. A maximum permissible proportion of Roma per community was set at 5 per cent [...].

As a Romani spokesman sardonically commented: ‘They planned the numbers for each village - horses, cows and Gypsies’ [...].”

III. 13

(from Guy 2001, p. 291)

“MAINSTREAM” POLICIES WITH “SPECIAL” EFFECTS: STERILISATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Sterilisation in Czechoslovakia is usually seen as a drastic example of a “special” policy towards Roma in Eastern Europe – in this case what is cited is the decree issued by the Ministry of Health on February 29, 1972, allowing the voluntary sterilisation of women, who had given birth to more than four mentally retarded children, accompanied by a financial incentive. This decree, which in theory was in line with the “mainstream” principles of the policies (i.e. not directly addressed towards Roma), repeated (in a milder way) similar state norms and practices in Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries. The example, however, illustrates that theoretically “mainstream” policies may lead to “special” and in many cases discriminating results in practice. Rather than applying them to the privileged members of a given society, restrictions tend to be imposed on the already restricted. In the case of “voluntary” sterilisation in Czechoslovakia, more than half of the women subjected to sterilisation in the 1970s were Roma women.

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“Conception on the overall public and cultural integration of Gypsies” was issued in 1972, and further developed and amended in 1976. As a whole, all these party and government documents contain several main directions, which the special state policy towards “Gypsies” should follow. They stand for the provision of full and lasting employment, the solution to problems of housing and health, encompassing the educational system for Roma children, and the improvement of their educational level, the promotion of Roma culture etc. [III. 12]

Nevertheless there are also a number of specific points of emphasis in the state policies in the individual countries, especially in the specific realisation of the main spheres mentioned. In Bulgaria new boarding schools began to be established from 1961, and from 1966 some of the schools, which were attended by Roma children, were transformed into “General secondary schools with emphasised labour training”. In Romania special measures were directed towards reducing the number of children in Roma families (allowances were only given to families with up to

5 children), owing to the great number of Roma children abandoned in nursing homes and orphanages. In Hungary in 1961, special measures were envisaged against the discrimination of Roma in Hungarian society, and the housing programme of 1964 envisaged the liquidation of 2,500 separate Roma settlements. In Czechoslovakia, a government decree in 1965 also envisaged the destruction of Roma quarters, mainly in Eastern Slovakia, and the dispersal of Roma living there to Slovak villages and towns and to the industrial regions of the Czech Socialist Republic. [III. 13]

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL HERITAGE

Differences in state policies in the individual countries are frequently determined or at least influenced by earlier cultural and historical models. In fact, the Eastern European countries at question took shape in the 19th and 20th centuries, based on three empires – the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire, each of which offered three different models of state policies towards Roma. The specifics of these main models and their influence on later historical stages can be illustrated with

the example of housing policies in the different countries of Eastern Europe.

The old imperial, cultural and historical specifics of the three empires are directly reflected in the various models of resettlement of settled Roma (which considerably prevailed over nomadic Roma in the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire). In the Ottoman Empire (respectively Bulgaria, Albania, and most of Yugoslavia and Romania) Roma lived within the area of the settlement, in their own ethnically determined quarters, called “mahala”, like the other ethnic communities. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire (respectively Hungary, Czechoslovakia, large parts of

Romania and smaller parts of Yugoslavia and Poland) Roma lived in settlements of their own, beyond the confines of the settlement, sometimes kilometres away, in the so called “ciganytelep” in Hungary, “osada”, “kolonia” in Slovakia, “kolonia”, “tigania” in Romania, “osada” in Southern Poland etc. In the Russian Empire (respectively the USSR and part of Poland) Roma most often lived mixed with the remaining population, usually in one or several dozens of houses one next to the other (with the exception of Transcarpathia where the Austro-Hungarian model prevails).

The respective state policy towards Roma in the countries of Eastern

EMANCIPATION IN YUGOSLAVIA

“In spite of inter-ethnic and political tensions following the death of Tito in 1980, the first Roma had been elected to town councils and Sait Balić from Niš became a member of the Serbian National Parliament. Four years later there were already fifty-three elected Romani members of town or provincial councils in addition to the one seat in the Serbian Parliament [...].

In 1981 the first bilingual radio programme in Romani and Serbian had been broadcast from Belgrade, entitled ‘A šunen romalen’ (Listen, Roma) and the series continued until 1987.”

III. 15

(from Kenrick 2001, p. 406)

BULGARIA: HIDING THE ROMA AWAY

Bulgaria was declared a unitary (one-nation) state with no other nationality in it; “the Bulgarian Turks” were ascribed Bulgarian origin, and forced to assume Turkish identity in the Ottoman Empire. As no “scientific” justification like that could be found in connection with the Roma, in order to prove their Bulgarian origins, officially they ceased to exist. There was no mention of Roma in public places, in the media and academic publications, and in a number of places along railway lines and motorways Roma quarters were hidden behind concrete walls. This absurd policy failed to achieve any result and did not help in the successful integration of Roma into the Bulgarian nation; on the contrary, the opposite effect was achieved.

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Europe is in line with these historically determined circumstances. In Hungary and Slovakia, the tendency is towards a total liquidation of separate Roma settlements; these steps were quite effective in Hungary, where most of the

approximately 2,500 “ciganytelep” were destroyed. In Romania the state policy in the housing sphere is varied and inconsistent, as is the historical heritage in various regions of the country. In Bulgaria, the existing decrees

for the removal of the Roma quarters were not followed by any serious activities, while in Yugoslavia and Albania – like in the Soviet Union and Poland – there is no special state policy towards Roma.

**ORGANISATIONS –
THE “ROMANI MOVEMENT”
IN YUGOSLAVIA**

An important feature of the state policy towards Roma in the countries of Eastern Europe is the attitude towards Roma organisations. In fact, the very establishment and development of such organisations was not possible without the approval and active support of the state and party structures. [III. 15]

Against this background, the push for self-organisation and emancipation, which gradually had evolved among Roma in Western Europe, leading to the founding of various organisations and finally to the beginning of the later so-called “Romani Movement” from the

70s onwards, did not lead to comparable results in the East. Still, there have been more or less singular and short-term initiatives in Bulgaria and in Czechoslovakia. In Hungary, a considerable number of cultural activities were carried out.

The situation in Yugoslavia is a specific case. In a 1969 article in the “Vecherni Novosti” newsletter in Belgrade, Slobodan Berberski, a Rom and communist functionary of long standing, political prisoner, resistance fighter in WW2, and member of the Central Committee of the Union of Yugoslav Communists (UYC), announced that Yugoslav Roma would create their own organisation, which had the main aim of assisting Roma to achieve the status of a “nationality” (at that time Yugoslavia had a complex state legislation and hi-

erarchical system, dividing its communities into different categories – ethnic groups, nationalities, and nations).

After the creation of the “Rom Association” in 1969, the process of building up branches in the various republics and later on in towns began, along with the creation of other Roma associations (cultural, sports, etc.). In the 1970s, over 60 Roma organisations existed and their number was constantly increasing. Various initiatives, largely cultural events (involving Roma ensembles, festivals), were supported by the Yugoslav State; books were published in Romani, Roma TV and radio broadcasts began (in Kosovo). In 1986, existing Roma associations were united in a Union of Roma Associations in Yugoslavia.

**PUBLIC INTEGRATION AND/OR
ASSIMILATION**

When state policies towards the Roma in Eastern Europe during the so-called “socialist period” are mentioned, assess-

ments to this day remain in the spirit of the “Cold War”. These policies, as a whole and in their concrete manifestations, are seen as synonymous with one of the numerous crimes of totalitarian regimes. It is difficult today, seen from the point of view of ideological clichés, to

find an objective and all-sided analysis of these state policies in their breadth.

The main problem here is to come to a precise distinction and to establish the relations between two interrelated and frequently overlapping processes – the processes of social integration

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Roma houses (foreground) and tower blocks in Filákovo, South-Eastern Slovakia. In the 1970s, the space in between was cleared of Roma huts, and the inhabitants moved into the newly erected blocks. In the steelworks (chimney in the background) 8,000 people were employed, among them (until 1989) hundreds of Roma. After the change, the factory was sold and re-established as part of a multinational company. Today, of the 800 people working in the factory, none of them is of Roma origin.

(from dROMa 1/2004, p. 10)



and assimilation. In the course of history many people, who lived surrounded by alien nations, made their way from social integration to assimilation (as a natural process or as the outcome of a certain state policy). Following the logic of this model (which by no means is universal), and applying it to Roma, each state measure in Eastern Europe directed towards Roma could be regarded as a step towards assimilation.

Bulgaria is the only country in Eastern Europe where the policy of integration of the Roma ends in a direct policy of full and unconditional assimilation. Attitudes to Roma here are subordinated to the policy directed towards the Turkish minority. A decision of the “Politburo” in 1962 notes “the negative tendencies of Turkification” among Bulgarian Muslims, “Gypsies” and Tatars; what followed gradually was a policy of “encouragement” to change Turkish-Arabic names to Bulgarian names. The last stage of this policy was connected with the so-called “revival process” in the winter of 1984-1985 when mass action, involving the security services, forced all Turks, Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) and Muslim Roma to change their names. In fact, this “revival process” was a forced assimilation, carried out with force in its last phase. [Ills. 16, 17]

Assimilatory tendencies towards Roma could also be found in state policies in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and to a certain extent in Romania. In the

1950s and 1960s there was talk, more or less openly, of the “natural assimilation of Gypsies” in Hungarian society. In the 1970s, the logic of state policy was already different, assuming a constructive spirit, to put it in modern terms. The Hungarian state began to support the integration of Roma into society, as well as the preservation and development of their ethnic culture, however it did not grant them the status of a national minority, as it did for other minority communities. The logical conclusion of this approach was also assimilation, however through time.

The policy towards the Roma in Czechoslovakia followed quite similar principles. Here – according to official norms – Roma were defined as a community of a different nature, which could not be compared with other minorities, with a different status (“citizens of Gypsy origin”). The policy towards Roma was defined as “social integration” and “acculturation”, however in practice this meant (without directly being formulated as such in official party and state documents) directing the development towards future assimilation.

The situation in Romania was somewhat similar. Here the assimilation of Roma into Romanian society has led to the emergence of large groups of people of Roma origin, who have lost (entirely or partially) their Roma identity and ethnic and cultural characteristics. The Romanian State took this process for granted and

for that reason did not pay much attention to Roma, regarding their problems as social and not ethnic. [Ill. 18]

It would not be justified to speak of assimilation attitudes and tendencies in state policies towards Roma, even as a long term perspective, in other Eastern European countries. Actually in Poland and Albania, which are countries based on an “one-nation” model, the state policy towards Roma was so insignificant, that it cannot be seen in this context. Indeed, Roma in Yugoslavia raised the question of receiving an official status, equal to other peoples, however the absence of such a status cannot be interpreted in support of an assimilation policy (eventually they were granted this status shortly before the break up of Yugoslavia). The concept of “Yugoslavism” presupposed the transformation of all peoples into a new type of community (“Yugoslavs”), yet this did not mean preliminary assimilation of Roma into other nations.

The situation was analogous in the USSR, where Roma are, in any case, quite an insignificant community (in comparison with the scale of different ethnicities in the Soviet Union) and it would be naïve to speak of a special policy for their assimilation. What prevailed in the Soviet Union was a state concept of the future “Soviet people” (a metaphor, analogous to the present day concept of the “common European family”), which presupposed the unification of all peoples in a qualitatively new formation.

ROMANIA: ROMA AS SECONDARY TARGETS OF “SYSTEMATISATION”

The known policy of “systematisation” carried out by Nicolae Ceausescu in the 1970s and 1980s included mass destruction of separate urban and rural quarters and of entire villages and the settlement of the inhabitants in new dwellings. This was mainly realised in Transylvania, which also led to inner migrations of Roma within Romania proper. However, this policy was not directed mainly towards the Roma, as was sometimes

thought to be the case, but in a national aspect was directed more towards a reduction of the size of the Hungarian minority, and the Roma in this case had been perceived as representatives of the majority, i.e. of the Romanian nation, hence assimilation aims concerning Roma were left to take their natural course in the distant future.

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CONCLUSION

If we consider that we are analysing a final outcome from a present day point of view and that the most important criteria is reaching a higher level of integration, whilst preserving ethnic and cultural characteristics, we can summarise that on the whole state policies (not a single policy!), regardless of the aims set out, eventually achieved quite varied results for the Roma in Eastern Europe. On the one hand, the Roma’s living conditions and their educational level has

seen a rapid improvement in comparison with past historical periods, the degree of their integration has grown, and a considerable strata of relatively well educated Roma have emerged etc. On the other hand, however, the price paid for this integration is quite high. Many Roma in Eastern Europe follow the road to social degradation and marginalisation, a process which has increased considerably and reached new depths after the “wind of change”. What is indicative is that these processes are best expressed and felt strongest in countries with

specific, clearly formulated policies towards Roma (in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria) and to a lesser extent where such policies were limited or simply absent. The final outcome of the policies towards Roma in the countries of Eastern Europe are achieved above all due to the overall social development and the “mainstream” policy towards Roma (i.e. the same policy as towards the remaining citizens), and to a much lesser extent due to the “specific” policies towards Roma as a separate community.

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