



The Romani people in Europe: From myths to real facts

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The gypsies in their peaceful throng
Wander on, and everywhere,
Wherever they settle, they belong.
Spurning the chains of civilization,
Aleko spends, as free as they,
His each and every roaming day
Without regrets or agitation.
He and his kin are still the same,
But out of mind his former days,
He has grown used to gypsy ways,
The snugness of their nightly home,
The rapture of pure idleness,
Their language, poor but sonorous.

(excerpt from *Gypsies*
by Alexander Pushkin, published 1827,
English translation by Antony Wood)



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The Gypsy image has always been between two extremes...



EXOTIC and FREE-SPIRITED



POOR and MARGINAL



... but have never corresponded to 'normality' or to what 'ordinary people' do in their life



Erika Horvatová, recently graduated medical doctor,
Prague (Czech Republic), Sept 2017



Dimitrina Demireva, a teacher on the first school day
Sofia (Bulgaria), Sept 2017





Julius Rostas, PhD in Sociology and Roma activists
Photo session presenting stereotypical image vs reality
Photo: Déri Miklós for the European Roma Institute

Stereotyping is a common thing. For many outsiders all Icelanders were ...



Foto credit: Gunnella Þorgeirsdóttir



The Roma

Self-denomination: *Rom* (sg. man, human), *Romni* (sg. woman), *Roma* (pl. people), *Romani* is the adjective.

Commonly known as Gypsies (= zingari, sígauni, Zigeuner, Gitans, Cigani, τσιγγάνων, циганин, etc.)

Origin from India, often speakers of Romani language

Negative and discriminatory attitudes by the surrounding populations

Gypsy and Roma are not interchangeable terms

GYPSY MIGRATIONS 900-1720



Ottoman Empire



Russian Empire



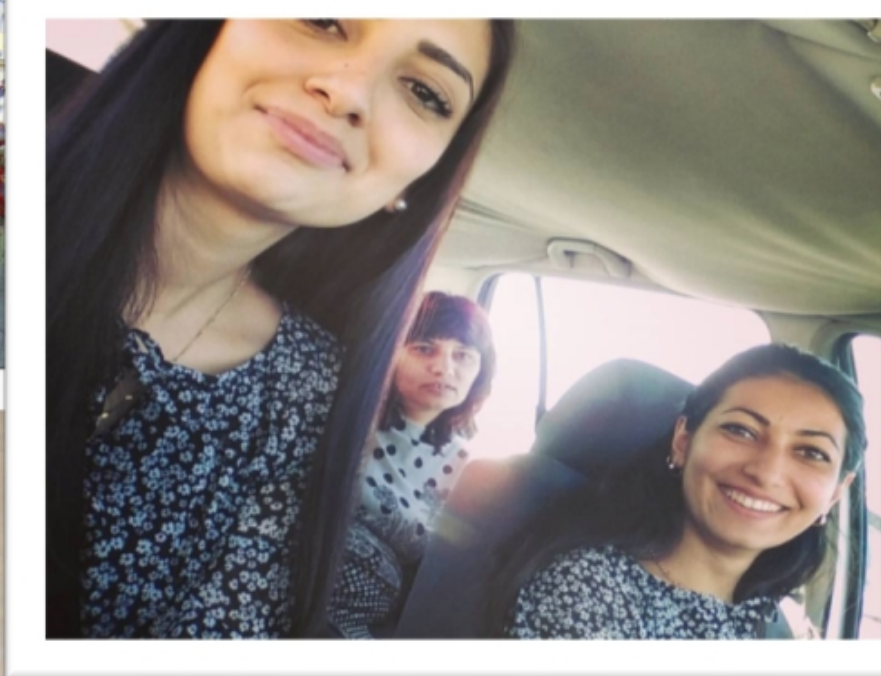
The Austro-Hungarian Empire, the West



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Sign warning Gypsies to not enter Dutch territory (1710)





Identity: both as Roma and as nationals of the state they live in





O shukar grast baxti dey
KA ZHAS
lo avel shi mi shey
O bokalo bar talo
donyav riklo
far yara
Xa enya
MISHT sovel
LA BARYA RAKLYA
MANGAV ZELEN
narel po wudar DIKHLAM
Das-duma Rromanes

LEARN ROMANI



Ronald Lee



Wrong attribution of social categories to Romani ethnicity and culture





East European Roma: Communism

- Radical changes after the WWII
- High level of social integration due to the totalitarian states policies
- Sedentarization since the 1950s of those who were nomads
- Access to education, employment and housing increased significantly



Meanwhile in the North: Sweden



“I never went to school until I was 33 years old even though I am a Swedish citizen, born in Sweden.”

Rosa Taikon
(1926 – 2017)



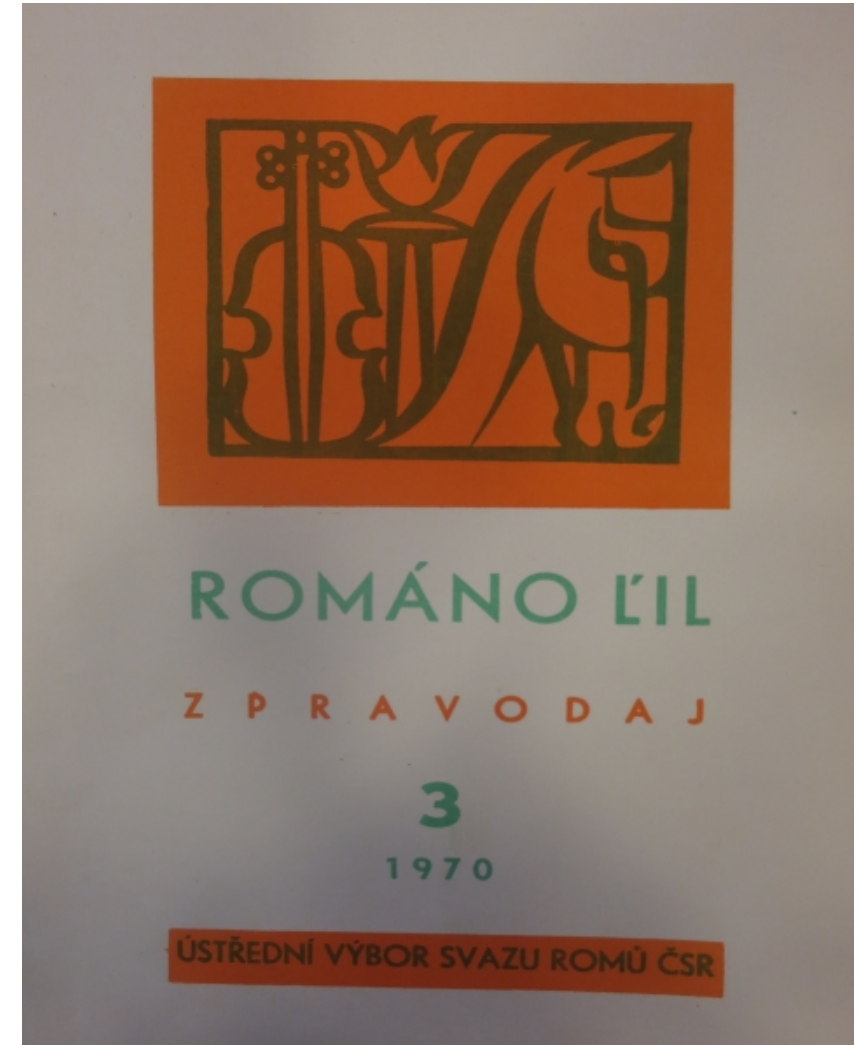
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First ever classes for Roma (adults),
Romani camp in Stockholm, 1953



East European Roma: Czechoslovakia

- Almost all of the Roma population perished during the WWII on Czech territories
- Labour migration of many Roma from Slovakia during communism
- Sterilization legislation adopted
- State support for cultural activities in the 1970s



Crisis of transition

- Crash of state economy
- Roma the first to be affected in all fields
- Free expression of Romani identity
- Raise of nationalism
- Roma migrate to Western European states in search for a better life





Romani international politics and Roma on the European agenda

The first World Gypsy Congress in London, April 8, 1971

Plenary Session of the Council of Europe's
European Roma and Travellers Forum, 2012





Gelem, gelem

(English translation of the Romani anthem)

I went, I went on long roads
I met happy Roma
O Roma, where do you come from,
With tents happy on the road?
O Roma, O Romani youths!
I once had a great family,
The Black Legion [*the Nazis*] murdered them
Come with me, Roma from all the world
For the Roma, roads have opened
Now is the time, rise up Roma now,
We will rise high if we act.

O Roma, O Roma youth!
Open, God, White doors
So I can see where are my people.
Come back to tour the roads
And walk with happy Roma
O Roma, O Romani youths!
Up, Romani people! Now is the time
Come with me, Roma from all the world
Dark face and dark eyes,
I love them like dark grapes
O Roma, O Romani youths!

Romani literature



Bronisława Wajs – Papusza, the poetess
(1908-1987)



Matéo Maximoff, the first novelist
(1917-1999)



Littérature mineur - 'minor' or 'smaller' literature (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari 1986)

Encountering the majority: Created by a minority within the dominant language tradition

Politically charged: Each matter is connected to politics of identity

Collective expression tool: Individual narration very closely related to collective destiny



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Auschwitz*

by Santino Spinelli

Gaunt face
dead eyes
cold lips
quiet
a broken heart
out of breath
without words
no tears

* Text sculptured in bronze letters around the pool at the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma victims of National Socialism in Berlin



Angela Merkel and Santino Spinelli at the Memorial in Berlin
October 2015, photo by Daniela de Rentis

Yes, there are Roma in Iceland ...





Setting up the Romani collection at Veröld - hús Vigdísar



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the Romani thank you is a blessing:

Te aven saste thaj baxtale!
[Be healthy and lucky!]

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