

Conclusion

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The gallery of portraits of leading activists in the field of Roma civic emancipation in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe during the interwar period presented in this book allows us to draw some general conclusions about the leading figures in this process, and the visionaries concerned with the future of Roma. Of course, each of the activists presented has his or her own distinct individual characteristics as a person, and at the same time, his or her activities are adapted to the specific historical context, in particular the situation in the countries of their living. Despite at times the shortage of extensive information, the available data allowed us to derive the main characteristics that were at least to some extent common to all these leaders of the Roma civic emancipation movement: namely, the newly formed Roma elite, which, in general (with, perhaps, the exception of Poland), was quite different from the old, “traditional” Gypsy elite that had existed for centuries.

Firstly, almost all the leading Roma activists in this historical period came from settled Roma families; in some cases (e.g. Andrey Taranov, Ilya Gerasimov, Mikhail Bezlyudskiy), they were nomadic only as children, i.e. their families were in transition to a sedentary lifestyle. We place this common characteristic in the first place because in the academic literature concepts and interpretations that need correction still prevail. From the beginning, academic research on the Gypsies/Roma in Western Europe has presented their nomadic way of life as their most essential feature, a key pillar of their community identity, and the measures for their sedentarisation were therefore perceived as a shackle in a chain of persecutions, while the policy of sedentarisation conducted in the 1950s–1970s in Central, South-Eastern, and Eastern Europe has continuously been interpreted (in the spirit of the Cold War, which to a large extent continues to dominate the academy to this day) as an example of the crimes of the communist regimes against the human and cultural rights of Roma.

This interpretation has some reason for Western Europe, and the measures of Maria Theresa and Joseph II in the second half of the 18th century in Central Europe were undoubtedly repressive and led to a crisis of identity. However, the situation in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe between the two world wars is quite different. In most countries in the region at that time, Roma had lived a predominantly sedentary life, for centuries. Moreover, in South-Eastern Europe, in the territories of the former Ottoman Empire, sedentary Roma have prevailed over nomads since at least the 15th century, and in the territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire since at least the 18th century; only in the territories of the former Russian Empire (USSR and Poland) did Roma nomads predominate. And, what is most important, in these interpretations the stance

on the issue of nomadism as expressed by the Roma themselves and, more specifically, by the Roma civic elite is completely missing, thus the voice of the leading Roma activists who initiated the Roma civic emancipation and created the first Roma organisations during the interwar period in the countries of the region is ignored.

In summary, none of the Roma activists presented in this book argued that the nomadic lifestyle of the Roma should be preserved or even supported by the state: some of them did not take a stand on this issue at all, for them, it was of no significance because their activity was focused primarily on sedentary Roma. In other cases (Romania, Poland, Latvia, Finland, and especially the USSR), Roma activists pleaded with the state to take measures to lead to the settlement of Roma nomads; in general, these calls remained without result, or as in the USSR, this result came only three decades later (Marushiakova & Popov, 2008b; 2020b).

There are only a few exceptions concerning the issue of nomadism, e.g. Josef Serinek's utopian idea of buying an island to settle nomads from different European countries (Serinek & Tesař, 2016, I, p. 37), or the idea for "the establishment of ambulatory schools for nomadic Gypsies" included in the *Appeal to All Gypsies in Romania* (issued in connection of the establishment of the General Association of the Gypsies in Romania headed by Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu) (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, pp. 332–336). However, these exceptions do not change the general conclusion about the attitude of the activists of the Roma civic emancipation movement during the interwar period towards nomadism (moreover, Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu is the only one who was acquainted with the experience of Gypsy policies in Western Europe from the time of his stay there).

The direct dependence of the Roma civic emancipation movement in the countries of the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe on the way of life of its leading representatives should not come as a surprise. On the contrary, this dependence is rather a logical consequence of the fact that the opportunities to understand the problems of the Roma in society and to formulate ways to overcome them (in a language understandable to society in the literal sense of the word) were much bigger among those members of the Roma community who live sedentarily and have achieved a higher degree of social integration than those of their peers who lead a nomadic way of life. Moreover, this social integration was directly linked to the receipt of a good education in the existing public educational institutions, which the nomads were deprived of. Hence, the next general characteristic of the leading Roma activists – the higher level of education achieved compared to the other Roma, who, at that time were, generally illiterate or poorly educated.

It is no coincidence that a large part of the Roma elite at that time came from Gypsy musicians. Compared to their other brethren, musicians' professional activities and way of life were much more closely connected with the life of the surrounding population and, accordingly, their interaction with the macro-society and influence of the dominant ideas were much stronger (both in everyday life and politically). As can be seen from the portraits of leading Roma activists book during the interwar period presented in this book, their education is very diverse and uneven. Among them, there are people

with a low level of education, with two or three years of primary school education (subsequently they self-educated), others received different types of vocational education (including music), others graduated different types of higher education and universities (including the so-called political universities in the USSR). Having an education was a necessary condition, but it was not enough for a person to become a Roma leader. For this, many other different qualities were needed.

An interesting question that is almost completely ignored by researchers is the mixed or even non-Roma origin of many Roma activists (both during the historical period under consideration and in subsequent historical epochs, including today). As can be seen from the presented portraits of Roma activists, the mixed origin of some of them does not turn out to be a problem that would hinder their realisation in the field of Roma civic emancipation; on the contrary, in some cases, it may even contribute to their better social integration in their childhood. However, in some cases, mixed origins or doubts about Roma origin can be a serious problem in relations between different Roma organisations, as was the case, for instance, in Romania, where the leaders of these organisations often publicly accuse each other of not being of Roma origin. In most cases, these allegations are unfounded, perhaps the only exception being the case of Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, for whom there is indeed a lack of convincing evidence to support his Roma origins. Unique is the case of Alexander German, who never claimed in any form to be of Roma origin, but was nevertheless accepted by other campaigners and by the society as a whole as a Gypsy activist. All this shows clearly that Roma origin was not an unconditional factor of inalienable importance in the field of Roma civic emancipation during the interwar period.

All differences in the details of the presented individuals do not cancel out what they had in common and what unite them, namely their common vision of the problems facing the Roma and, accordingly, the need to eliminate them so that they can become equal members of the societies of which they were and are an integral part, while at the same time being preserved and developed as a separate community. A perspective of national autonomy, which in the near or distant future was to grow into the establishment of an own Gypsy nation-state is also present. This was the core of Roma civic emancipation, which at least in the period from the 19th century to the First World War, was an integral and inseparable part of the overall historical development of the processes of creation of modern nations during this period in the Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe.

We are well aware that these considerations may sound shocking to many, especially to those who continue to perceive Roma as “part of our world and yet distinct from the rest of us” (Stewart, 1997, p. 12), for whom the Roma continue to be a people radically different from other European nations and therefore segregated (not only in life but also in the field of academia) to a special position, which practically take them out of the main trends in the general historical development. That is why, for example, Roma and Roma authored texts are omitted even from most recent historical books concerning the processes of nation-building in the region of Central and South-Eastern Europe (Trencsényi

& Kopeček 2007ab; Ersoy et al., 2010ab; Mishkova et al., 2014). Despite some noble intentions such as “bringing together and making accessible basic texts of the respective national tradition” and to “challenge to the self-centred and ‘isolationist’ historical narrative” (Ersoy et al., 2010a, p. 1), Roma remained excluded from it. We can only hope that after the publication of this triptych (the three books on the history of Roma civic emancipation), this academic stereotype will finally be broken and the history of the Roma will become an integral part of the modern history of European nations.

A necessary condition for this, however, is for the discipline of Romani Studies too to follow its own path of development and to break the limits of the academic ghetto, in which often this academic field (which is uniting representatives of different sciences) is posed. We can only welcome the attempts in this direction conducted in recent years. However, they should be not concentrated on the quest of finding a magic key in certain basic concepts (e.g. Antigypsyism, Resistance, Post-colonialism, Decolonisation etc.), which should explain the whole history and current state of the Roma. To think in this way means to believe that it is possible to attain the absolute truth and reach the “end of history”. Here it is not a question of whether, and especially how much, when, where, how, etc. these concepts are relevant to all possible specific research problems related to the Roma, but to the general impossibility of one academic field to be defined by a pre-determined theoretical discourse and limited within its framework. (for more details cf. Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, pp. 114–119). Real history is always much more complex and diverse than preconceived ideological and/or methodological frameworks, which historical diversity constantly breaks down and refutes. Attempts to adapt historical facts to a chosen thesis (e.g. attempts to explain the affirmative national policy in the early USSR towards the Gypsies as a policy of Antigypsyism) through misinterpretations, overinterpretations, or pre-selected approaches, lead to situations in which, in principle, correct concepts are discredited by false evidence, and this applies to any preconceived discourse that is absolute and accepted as universal. In more general terms, and from a methodological point of view, one should not work with the ‘or’ principle but, rather, with the ‘and’ principle. This broadly means that historical (and contemporary) processes and phenomena should be explored from multiple perspectives, which should not be opposed to each other but combined according to the specifics of the particular cases, studied in the general context of entangled history, in which the Roma are an integral part of society.

The development of the processes of Roma civic emancipation throughout the historical period from the 19th century to the Second World War must be divided into two main parts (until the First World War and then, until the Second World War). The First World War and the subsequent post-war peace regulation (the so-called Versailles system) were the turning point in the development of Roma civic emancipation, which changed the leading position of the various visions of the Roma civic elite. This development is directly dependent on the specific historical context, and the processes take place in a paradigm that includes the two main dimensions of the dichotomy ‘community – society’, and

within these two separate periods, the priorities in the relationship between these two main dimensions change significantly.

Until the First World War, the Roma in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe lived in three multinational empires – the Austro-Hungarian Empire (formally two-partite monarchy from 1867), the Ottoman Empire (from which in the 19th century several nation-states gradually separated – Serbia, Greece, Romania, Bulgaria), and the Russian Empire. Under these conditions, the movement for civic emancipation of the Roma repeats the models of national development of the other nations living together with them. That is why the visions for the future of the community of the leading Roma activists at that time are in the direction of gaining national autonomy in Austria-Hungary (Nikola Mihailo Mali, the authors of the *Petition for National Equality*, Janos Kaldaras and Sava Mihaly, “King” Raphael), as well as obtaining certain attributes of the nation-state (one’s education, one’s church), in the perspective and of one’s state, in the Ottoman Empire (Iliya Naumchev), i.e. the leading priority in the dichotomy ‘community – society’ is the development as a community in the direction of an ethnonational state.

During this period, however, a tendency to search for the development of the community in another direction also appeared: as an integral part of the surrounding society in the composition of other emerging ethno-nations (in this case Hungarian) of the population living with them (example of János Ipolysági Balogh, József Boldizsár, Ferenc Nagyidai Sztojka) – a trend that will be dominant in the next historical period. Moreover, during this period the first sprouts of two other important directions in the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement emerged, which would be developed and implemented in the coming years. It concerns seeking a solution to the problems of the Roma through participation in the socio-political struggles, and in particular in the communist movement. In other words, achieving an equal position of the community is seen as an integral part of the radical change of the whole society (Ignatij Antonenko, Nikola Kochev, Mustafa Mehmet, Helios Gómez, and others).

The unity of the process of Roma civic emancipation in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe in this period is conditioned by the fact that it is an integral and inseparable part of the general development of modern nationalism throughout the region. From this point of view, its development fits into the separate phases in the development of modern nationalism in the already mentioned several times concept of Miroslav Hroch (2005). From the published materials (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b) it is clear how the first phase of this process was born and realised among the Roma (i.e., the creation of their own Roma national vision) and how it made the first steps during the period before the First World War, while the second phase of this process (dissemination and promotion of visionary ideas among the masses) was very poorly represented at the time, and the ideas of the Roma visionaries remained virtually unknown to the Roma masses.

The situation in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe changed radically after the end of the First World War. In place of multinational empires, new (or

not so new, but significantly expanding their territories) ethno-national states emerged (the cases of USSR and Yugoslavia were different, but they did not cancel out this general trend). However, the Roma did not create their own nation-state; moreover, they were not included anywhere among the national minorities defined by the so-called Versailles system of international relations, the foundations of which were laid at the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920), which treated only the minorities of the existing nation-states (as well as the Jews). In other words, unlike many other (but not all) peoples inhabiting the three multinational empires, the Roma failed to realise their national project, which turned out to be a key moment in the development of the ideas of Roma civic emancipation.

The reasons for this unrealised historical chance are many. Perhaps in the first place here should be placed the diasporic way of their settlement, due to which the Roma de facto do not have “their territory”, i.e. nowhere did they constitute the majority of the population, but were always a minority (despite the fact that, in general, the total number of Roma at that time exceeded or at least was commensurate with the number of many other nations for example, Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Albanians, etc.). In addition, at that time, the social differentiation of Roma communities was very poorly developed, i.e. they did not have their own economic, political, cultural, intellectual, etc. elite and even their middle class, and occupied (in general, despite some exceptions) the lowest levels of society. The leading visionaries of the Roma civic emancipation were separate individuals, and their ideas had not reached the masses, i.e. among the Roma, the second phase in the development of modern nationalism (according to Miloslav Hroch) had not even begun. Moreover, unlike many other emerging nations in the region, the Roma did not have their “patrons” and no lobby among the Great Powers, who drew the boundaries of the new post-war system, and the question of them had not even been raised. This was not a manifestation of a special Antigypsyism, although the contemptuous (at best) attitude towards Gypsies in the region (as well as globally) was dominant in society, and this attitude also had its impact.

However, all this is not enough to accept the claim that “Roma are among the last groups in Europe to discover the potential and power of ethno-nationalism to fight for a political space of their own” (Gheorghe & Mirga, 1997, p. 5) without reservations and further clarifications. As it is clear from this book, in the second half of the 19th century, Roma were an integral part of the processes of development of modern ethno-nationalism in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe at that time, i.e. in this respect they are by no means “among the last groups in Europe”. The quoted characteristic of Roma directly corresponds to the concept of the Gypsies as one of the “most backward” peoples in the early USSR, who need constant support, with the help of which they must overcome their historical backwardness. In this case, there is another historical paradox in which early communism in the USSR and modern liberalism lend a hand (cf. for example, the case of the concept of Antigypsyism created in the early USSR

and especially relevant today as a basic ideological platform for interpreting the whole history of the Gypsies/Roma).

From a realistic point of view, until the beginning of the First World War, on an ideological (and, in some respects, even practical) level, the movement for Roma civic emancipation was not only an integral part of the development of modern nationalism but, more than that, no matter how unbelievable it may sound at first, in some cases, it was even comparable to similar movements in some other nations in the region. If we compare some of the important markers for the formation of a modern nation, such as creating a dictionary of their language or their national drama, it turns out that the Roma were ahead of some other peoples in the region (e.g. Estonians, Latvians, Albanians, etc.). Among the Roma, the processes of national development went unevenly, and after the end of the First World War, unlike other nations, they did not receive a historical chance to create their own nation-state. Of course, history cannot be written in a subjunctive mood, but it is still worth thinking about this potentiality.

In the new post-war realities, in the period between the two world wars, the movement for Roma civic emancipation was placed in a new, radically different situation, in which multinational empires were replaced by nation-states. In this situation, new Roma leaders appeared, whose new visions of the goals and objectives of this movement radically changed its leading paradigm. During this period, the leading aim of the movement for Roma civic emancipation was no longer the development of the community in the direction of its construction as a separate nation; in frames of nation-states, this goal was already the equality of the community within the civic nation to which the Roma in the individual state belonged (i.e. the development of the Roma as an integral part of society). Of course, the ideas of Roma activists from the previous historical period did not disappear without a trace, but they were significantly transformed in the new social and political realities. Even the very idea of “Gypsy autonomy” was revived in the conditions of the early USSR in the form of a Gypsy Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the creation of which was no longer viewed as laying the foundation for the development of one’s own state, but for more successful social integration in the conditions of the Soviet state. The desire to achieve certain attributes of the nation-state can also be found among some Roma activists, e.g. the aspirations for Roma national education and the Roma national church in Romania, expressed by Constantin S. Nicolăescu-Ploșor (*O Rom*, 1934b, p. 1), but they were also limited to the civic nations of which the Roma in these countries were part, and were based on the then prevailing concept of national minorities in Central and South-Eastern Europe (although Roma in no country in the region had the status of a minority in this sense). Against this background, the goal “to create a longing feeling among the Gypsies for the creation of a national heart in their own land” in the Statute of the United Common-Cultural and Educational Organisation of the Gypsy Minorities in Bulgaria ‘Ekipe’ (Unity) (CSA, f. 1 B, op. 8, a.e. 596, l. 50; Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, p. 107) seems not so unexpected and indicates

some (albeit indirect) continuity in the development of the movement of Roma civic emancipation with the previous historical period.

Generally speaking, the movement for Roma civic emancipation was an effort to achieve a fair (from the perspective of the Roma community represented by its leaders) and a mutually acceptable balance in the community-society relationship. An initial and irreplaceable condition for Roma activists was the preservation of the community with its main ethnocultural characteristics within the general public framework; without this, the whole movement for Roma civic emancipation would lose its meaning. It is no coincidence that we emphasise that, in the end, for all Roma visionaries, the ultimate aim was always one concerning the future of the whole community. Otherwise, if the process of seeking a fair and equal relationship with the surrounding population were to take place at the individual or family level or involved limited, relatively smaller or larger local or regional communities, the processes would inevitably lead to assimilation in the majority ethnic nation or into some other large national minority. Achieving end-to-end results from such voluntary assimilation (as well as attempts at forced assimilation, which are not considered here), was usually met with the opposition of the preferred ethnic nation or other national minority, who, however, did not really want to accept “Gypsies” as part of them in everyday life (in the best-case scenario, they accepted them only in theory, or in political discourse), so these processes were far from complete and irreversible, as evidenced by the various variants of their modern development (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015a).

It should be borne in mind here that Gypsies in different countries in the region were perceived differently by the authorities than other national minorities. This was not only predetermined by the Versailles system, which separated them from these minorities but was also influenced by the centuries-old contempt for them by the macro-society. Thus, during the interwar period, the Roma were deprived of the opportunity to at least insist on obtaining the rights that were provided for national minorities according to the accepted international norms. It should be noted, however, that the Roma leaders themselves, according to the political situation in individual countries, avoided equating themselves with other national minorities (e.g. Hungarians in Czechoslovakia and Romania, Turks in Bulgaria, etc.), and, on the contrary, instead of confining themselves to assurances of loyalty, preferred to emphasise in different ways their commitment to the respective “indigenous”, dominant ethno-nation (e.g. by emphasising participation in wars).

In their efforts to achieve the main goals of the movement for Roma civic emancipation, the main problem for the new Roma elite became the relations with the authorities in the countries in which they lived. In fact, the main problem in this regard was the desire of Roma activists to apply an effective state policy to the Roma, which would lead to the solution of their problems as citizens and to the elimination of existing inequalities in this regard (i.e. to a large extent, in the practice to achieve the goals of the movement for Roma civic emancipation) and, accordingly, to improve their quality of life, while in

general, the authorities in all countries in the region (except for the early USSR, where the affirmative national policy was the leading one and included also Gypsies) remained indifferent to these desires. The reasons for this attitude coming from the authorities was not due to some special anti-Gypsy policy, but to the fact that Gypsies were not perceived as a serious problem of primary national importance in any of the countries in the entire region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. Moreover, in the context of the national policies of all countries concerned, during the interwar period, Gypsies were never perceived as a problem of particular importance, and their place in these policies was put in the background (in best case because they were usually not taken into account at all). The reasons for this attitude towards Gypsies varied from country to country, but each of them had its own priorities in their national politics; in fact, perhaps the only thing that unites all of these countries was the general disregard for Gypsies. Bernard Gilliat-Smith's words can serve as a great illustration of this attitude:

Bulgarians, the lords of the land, might be expected to know something more concerning the Gypsies, who are, after all, in Bulgaria, numerically no negligible quantity. Such is, however, not the case. To them, every Gypsy man is just a gypsy, a dirty scoundrel, while every Gypsy woman is the fitting subject for some soak joke. At best some lawyer may give you a belated copy of a futile by-law, which never interested anyone save perhaps its author, and has remained a dead letter since its unfortunate birth. I would add, that the Bulgarians' ignorance on this subject is only surpassed by their inability to understand that there is anything in it worth learning. (Petulengro, 1915–1916, p. 2).

As described in the quote above, ignorance was omnipresent in the region, even in cases where, as in Hungary, Gypsy musicians gained widespread public support but they received it not as Gypsies but as bearers of Hungarian music expressing a Hungarian national idea, or in Czechoslovakia, where they were addressed in the framework of the civilisation mission and the policies of “colonisation” of the eastern suburbs (Baloun, 2020). The only exception to the general lack of engagement of the authorities with the Gypsies (and thus with the Roma civic emancipation movement) in the countries of the whole region is the case of the early USSR, where Gypsy activism was supported by the Soviet state in the context of its affirmative national policy (terminated in the late 1930s). And, even more importantly, in general (though in some cases insufficiently) in the early Soviet Union the main leading visions of the Gypsy new civic elite for the future of their community were also supported.

This attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the Gypsies during the interwar period is directly related to the development of a new line in the Roma civic emancipation movement, namely its entry and dissolution in the struggles of the communist parties in many countries in the region. However, this new line was not the result of a purposeful “export of revolution” by the USSR because at least in Turkey and Bulgaria these processes originated and developed in the years before the First World War and the creation of the USSR. However, the influence of Soviet Gypsy policy on the Roma in the

region is unquestionable, and information about what was happening to Gypsies in the USSR reached through various channels, not only through the communist press but also through mainstream publications (e.g. Мир, 1934, p. 3).

Another important line in the development of the movement for Roma civic emancipation during the interwar period arose and developed along the lines of religion and religious institutions. This line is expressed both in the struggles of the Roma in Bulgaria to take leading positions in some Islamic religious institutions, and in the emergence of the cult of the “Gypsy Saint” Aunt Bibia in Serbia/Yugoslavia and related organisations, and reached its final phase in the creation of a “national church” (the Gypsy Church in Bulgaria). This line of development is especially important from a contemporary point of view, because after a long period of hidden illegal existence (at least in Bulgaria and Romania) during the communist regimes after the Second World War, after the collapse of the so-called socialist camp in the late 1990s, the Gypsy/Roma (both designations are used) evangelical churches experienced a tumultuous renaissance in their development, accompanied by the mass emergence of new evangelical churches among the Roma in countries throughout the vast region of South-Eastern, Central and Eastern Europe. And what is particularly impressive is that this new evangelical movement, which is de facto an integral (albeit separate) part of the movement for Roma civic emancipation, covers many times more Roma than are engaged in the professional Roma NGOs sector created and sustained through foreign funding, in which foreign donors have invested (and continue to invest) incomparably more funds. This should be a serious reason for reflection on the part of both Roma civil society activists themselves and scholars as well.

However, the fact that during the interwar period the main focus of the work of Roma activists was to attract the commitment of the authorities in the respective countries to start actively working to solve the numerous problems of the Gypsies does not mean that the Roma elite did not work among the community. On the contrary, in the absence of an adequate response from the authorities (which is the general case, except for the USSR), the main field of their activities was the work in the community, often combined with efforts to promote it in public, i.e. among society.

In this activity, the Roma elite faced two rounds of problems. The first of them was related to the relations in the community, and much more often, the relations within it, between the Roma activists themselves. As can be seen from the cases shown in this book, these relations were not always the best; on the contrary, internal conflicts often arose among the Roma elites on various occasions (most often regarding competitions for leadership positions). These internal conflicts did not prove fatal for the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement, because in the end its development was determined by the general trends in social development, but they took a lot of effort, which greatly reduces its effectiveness and results.

The second round of problems of the Roma elite was linked to its relations with “external” to the community factors of various nature, such as state and local authorities and

institutions, political parties, civil society organisations, etc. In the course of these relations, different forms of dependences began to emerge among the Roma elites, and thus here lay the beginning of a problem, which today is perhaps one of the most serious, facing the movement for Roma civic emancipation.

An extremely important feature of the movement for Roma civic emancipation in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, which is common to all countries in the region, is its strongly “national character” concerning the countries in which they live and part of which civic nation they are. In the historical period between the two world wars, the processes of Roma civic emancipation had this very important common feature that determined the main leading paradigm in which they developed. All the described processes remained restricted within individual countries, and the demand for balance in the community-society relationship was perceived in the confines of the relevant civic nations to which Roma in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe belonged. Sure, at least on an abstract level, Roma activists were aware of the unity of their community on a transborder scale, but the presented cases of the public proclamation of the international dimension of these processes ultimately pursued “internal” goals namely to raise the image and to emphasise the particular importance of the Roma civic emancipation among majorities in those respective countries. There are only a few exceptions in this regard, but they are more in the realm of curiosities, e.g. the above-mentioned idea of Josef Serinek from Czechoslovakia in 1933 to organize a congress of “all the nations living on the road”, at which to be decided to buy an island where they could settle (Serinek & Tesař, 2016, I, p. 37), but they could not be taken seriously. Much more famous is the case of the so-called Gypsy Kings in Poland, which has so far been interpreted one-sidedly, without taking into account its specificity as a media phenomenon in which public messages pursue goals other than proclaimed. In the plans of these “Gypsy Kings”, which were widely covered by the media (not only in Poland but also in many other countries around the world), all of them promoted the idea of creating an independent Gypsy state. Its future location was sought on three continents – Asia (in India), Africa (indicated alternatives were: Egypt, Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somalia, Uganda, Namibia) and South America. The very emergence of this idea is not surprising in the context of the colonial aspiration of Poland and given also widely discussed plans in the public space (and especially in Poland itself) of international Zionism to create a Jewish state in Palestine. An interesting question that cannot be categorically answered is whether the “Gypsy Kings” themselves believed this to be realistic or whether they used this motive only to attract public attention in order to raise their own authority before the state authorities in Poland (in any case, the latter seems more likely). The fact that, especially in their international activities (more exactly, only the declared ones), they have always had in mind the opportunity that through this they could exert some influence on Polish authorities is beyond any doubt. The desire to secure the support of the main political leaders in Poland, including Jozef K. Piłsudski himself (with some

successes achieved in this regard), is also a constant theme. This indicates that the aforementioned approach was considered to be a way to achieve a position in the state power structures as representatives of the Gypsies.

In fact, in sum, the absolute priority of the Roma civic emancipation movement during the interwar period was the situation in the countries where the Roma lived. Attempts from today's point of view to 'discover' some international dimension of this movement (e.g. in the so-called "international Gypsy congress" in Kisfalú in 1879 or in the so-called "international congress" in Bucharest in 1933, as well as in roots of the contemporary Roma flag, about which it is often claimed that it was adopted at this congress) are in fact devoid of any real historical grounds and are speculation and an attempt to falsify the past from a today perspective (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, pp. 463–464). Nowadays, the results of these blatant manipulations in attempts to create a new, Roma historical narrative are supported in some circles of contemporary Roma activism, as well as among some academics, mainly those who believe that their public commitment to supporting Roma should be at expense of the historical truth and includes also support in the creation of the Roma national historical mythology. This approach explains why some authors have tried in vain to discover the international dimension of the movement for Roma civic emancipation before the Second World War. Because they could not find support in the historical sources, they have described supposed international connections with the added stipulation "whether mythical or real" (Klímová-Alexander, 2005a, p. 195). Such verbal equilibristics is not only unfounded but also completely unnecessary.

In fact, the real international dimensions of the Roma civic emancipation movement emerged only in the 1950s in Western Europe (the work of Ionel Rotaru, who called himself Vaida Voevod), and developed in the 1960s and 1970s when the movement began to break the boundaries of nation-states and to develop in the context of modern processes of globalisation and pan-European unity. The emergence of the Roma movement on the international stage and its real (i.e. not just on the level of ideas) transformation from national into an international movement began *de facto* (notwithstanding all public declarations in this regard before and after the Second World War) barely with the International Romani Congress in London in 1971, and this is, in fact, the most important feature of this historic event, regardless of all the mythology that has been created around it nowadays (Marushiakova & Popov, 2018b). Only then did the 'community – society' relations become further complicated and started to take on a new, international dimension, which substantially (but not fundamentally) changed the content and purpose of the whole movement for Roma civic emancipation, and which, accordingly, made the achievement of a balance in these relationships even more difficult.

Of course, neither in the time of the emergence of international Roma activism nor today, is there a clear boundary (nor any contradiction) between the two leading paradigms (national and international dimensions of the Roma civic emancipation movement); just on the contrary, these two paradigms often intersect and complement each other (that is why the same people had participated in both, especially in the past).

Moreover, both in the recent past and today, the international dimension often continued to be used to achieve specific goals at the national level, i.e. in this respect, the models set during the interwar period remain relevant. Moreover, it would be an exaggeration to believe that the whole development of the Roma civic emancipation movement in the years after the Second World War to the present day has created its own new national project (despite the emergence of new ideas – such as transborder community, a nation without a state, European minority, post-modern nation, etc.), even more, it is not possible to state that it successfully passed to the second phase (according to Hroch) of nation-building process and received distribution (and acceptance) of ideas by the ordinary Roma masses (Marushiakova & Popov, 2005). Despite the relatively good start of the Roma civic emancipation movement in the 19th century, in the end, the processes did not progress much and their prospects in the near future remain unclear. The only thing that can be said with certainty is that its development depends to a large extent on the future of Europe itself, where the ideas of pan-European unity meet with growing opposition from nation-states, and the results of this clash will predetermine future trends also in its development, as well as its national and international dimensions.

An immutable part of the process of nation-building of any community in its transformation into a nation involves the creation of their own national heroes, who acquire symbolic meaning and become national symbols that are part of the new national ideology. In this respect, it seems that the Roma international movement is making some progress nowadays and, at least in cyberspace, many Roma organisations, in various forms, impose a set of names of world-famous personalities from the fields of art, science, politics, sports, etc., to whom Roma origin is attributed (here we do not discuss the question of the extent to which in each of the individual cases there is a real basis for this, and the extent to which it is rather a matter of manipulation – both in some of these individuals from past and present). These personalities today are declared to be “famous Roma”, and they are promoted in the public space as an opportunity to show national pride, and are used as a tool to raise Roma ethnic self-confidence and to strengthen Roma national identity. These are processes that are common to all emerging nations, and the Roma are no exception. The problematic issue here is neither in the primordialistic approach to the interpretation of the concept of Roma identity, in which the leading logic for many contemporary Roma activists is that if there were Roma among your distant ancestors, then you are a Roma, nor in the fact that this Roma origin in many of these cases is not based on real grounds and therefore the allegations of such origin are perceived by the surrounding society rather as phenomena of an anecdotal nature. The real problem here is that all these “famous Roma” have de facto no involvement in the Roma civic emancipation movement in any form (many of them have never mentioned that they were of Roma origin, and some even have denied it). For these reasons, it will be very difficult to impose all these personalities as national symbols for the Roma. Well-known is that for instance, Alexander Pushkin’s great-grandfather was of African descent however he has become a national symbol for Russia and not for Ethiopia; a case quite similar is with

Charlie Chaplin, who himself wrote in *My Autobiography*: “Grandma was half gypsy. This fact was the skeleton in our family cupboard” (Chaplin, 1966, p. 8), however this statement seems not enough convincing to perceive him as a national symbol of Roma.

Against the background of all these “famous Roma”, the real historical Roma elite, thanks to which the movement for Roma civic emancipation arose and developed from the middle of the 19th century until the Second World War, remain in the background, texts about its representatives are relatively few, and many of them still are almost unknown. We can only hope that this book, in which we present the leading figures of this historical Roma elite, will contribute to the creation and establishment (both among the Roma themselves and among the macro-society of which they are an integral part) of a true national pantheon of heroes of Roma civil emancipation.