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## Execution of Forced “Gypsy” Assimilation Policy in Hungary during the Socialist Era

Following World War II, Hungary fell under the influence and surveillance of the Soviet Union. This resulted in the Hungarian Workers’ Party assuming complete control over the nation. After the defeat of the 1956 Revolution, the ruling party re-formed as the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, and after a few years of preparatory work, it composed its Roma policy of forced assimilation. This study presents the Roma policy of the single party state as carried out in the county of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén. This county had the largest Roma population and was simultaneously designated for major socialist industrialisation and social engineering. Following the transition to democracy in 1989/90, numerous sociological and anthropological studies were conducted in the region, and this location remains highly emphasised in Hungarian social sciences. In presenting the nationwide Roma policy, I have used my source publication, while in examining policy execution in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, I have relied on the county archives.

**Keywords:** Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, Roma policy, forced assimilation, county policy execution, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County.

## Izvajanje politike prisilne asimilacije Romov na Madžarskem v obdobju socializma

*Po drugi svetovni vojni je Madžarska padla pod vpliv in nadzor Sovjetske zveze, s tem pa je popolno oblast nad državo prevzela Madžarska delavska stranka. Po porazu revolucije leta 1956 se je vladajoča stranka ponovno vzpostavila kot Madžarska socialistična delavska stranka in po nekaj letih pripravljanih del oblikovala politiko prisilne asimilacije Romov. Namen članka je predstaviti politiko do Romov, ki jo je enopartijska država izvajala v županiji Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén. Županija, ki je beležila največje število romskega prebivalstva, je bila hkrati deležna tudi konkretne socialistične industrializacije in socialnega inženiringa. Po demokratični tranziciji v letih 1989/90 so bile v regiji opravljene številne sociološke in antropološke študije, območje pa se še vedno pogosto omenja v madžarskih družboslovnih znanostih. Predstavitev politike do Romov na državni ravni temelji na avtorjevi izvorni publikaciji, podatki o izvajanju politike v županiji Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén pa so pridobljeni iz županijskih arhivov.*

**Ključne besede:** Madžarska socialistična delavska stranka, romska politika, prisilna asimilacija, izvajanje županijske politike, županija Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén.

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# 1. Introduction and Methodology

In my study, I aimed to explore the implementation of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Gypsy policy in Borsod-Abúj-Zemplén county (BAZ county for short) in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, I tried to examine the impact of the socialist-era Gypsy policy on the Gypsy population living in the county. It should be noted that I did not intend to explore this period of the history of the Gypsies in BAZ county, but the measures taken by the local bureaucracy aimed at the Gypsy populace and documents recording Gypsy policy. Consequently, the sources have viewed the Gypsy populace as a social problem, as well as one of public health and law enforcement. In Hungary, this selected county was home to the largest number of Gypsies during the Kádár era (the historical period named after János Kádár, leader of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, which lasted from 1956 to 1989 in Hungary), and it was also the county with the largest number of Gypsy settlements. The forced industrialisation and urbanisation that took place during the socialist era had a powerful impact on the county, which became the bastion of heavy industry. These developments also had an impact on the lives of the Gypsies living there, many of whom were employed as skilled or unskilled industrial workers, and some of whom moved from the villages to the cities. Currently, the county has the highest number and proportion of Gypsies in Hungary and is also noteworthy for its ghettoised villages and urban areas. Furthermore, following the collapse of socialist heavy industry, there is considerable unemployment in the county, especially among Gypsies (Kemény et al. 2004; Berey 1990).

Over the past decades, numerous source publications and source reports have appeared, which published documents on the Gypsy policy of the single-party state or sources related to its implementation in counties and cities (Binder 2014). However, the latter works were not written with a view to completeness, and they were not linked to nationwide decrees, resolutions and measures. This present work is based on many years of systematic archival research. In the National Archives of the National Archives of Hungary, I examined the strictly confidential documents belonging to some of the highest political organs (the Political Committee, the Agitation and Propaganda Committee, the Council of Ministers), which were published in my source publication *It's Obvious That Gypsies Cannot Be Viewed as a Nationality: Documents Concerning the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Gypsy Policy 1956–1989* (Hajnáczky 2019a). In the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Archives of the National Archives of Hungary, I discovered documents from the County Council, the Executive Committee, and the County Party all relating to Gypsies. Both at the national and county level, I worked to include a comprehensive image of the given bodies. Together, these rich resource bases provided an opportunity for an in-depth

exploration of the single-party state's Gypsy policy and the interrelationships between the national and county levels.

It is important to write a few words on the bureaucratic set-up of the single party-state, whose documents I examined. In the socialist era, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had absolute power, and this left its mark on the entire state apparatus. The party hierarchy and the state hierarchy were established in parallel and were connected through a number of formal and informal links. The party and its subordinate party organs had authoritative power over the state organs at a national and local level. Decision-making was the responsibility of the party hierarchy, while the role of state bodies was largely limited to implementation. All levels of the state hierarchy were dependent on the same or higher levels of the party hierarchy. The system was structured in this way at both a national and county level. To illustrate the above-mentioned bodies, the Political Committee and the Agitation and Propaganda Committee were responsible for decision-making as part of the party hierarchy, while the Council of Ministers was the state body responsible for implementation. In the BAZ county, the County Party played a role in decision-making as part of the party hierarchy, while the County Council and the Executive Committee were responsible for implementation (Kornai 1993, 69–71; Csanádi 1995, 28–44; Bihari 2005, 253–257).

To explore the past and examine the available sources, there are a number of methodologies and perspectives that are called postmodern, methods such as critical discourse analysis or the perspective of “historians of the present” (Gyáni 2020; Burke 2006b; Lorey et al. 2021, 93–127; Géring 2008a; 2008b; Cseh-Szombathy & Ferge 1975, 112–123). In this work, however, I inductively apply what is known as the “traditional” or “positivist” historiographical methodology, seeking a descriptive analysis of the sources in strict chronological order (Bertényi 2006). This is not to denigrate the methodological possibilities I have just mentioned but is justified by my choice of subject, while at the same time following the Annales school approach (Burke 2006a). The reasoning behind my choice was that this method is the best way to reconstruct the ideas of those in power and their concept of the Gypsies and their social situation, as well as the functioning of the national and county administrative bodies. The approaches mentioned above are more suited to exploring prejudices and exclusionary measures against Gypsies.

When analysing the sources, I did not seek to uncover their truthfulness or capture “reality” (Gyáni 2007), but to reconstruct as thoroughly as possible the bureaucracy's impression of the Gypsies at any given time, as this was the basis for its measures and decrees. I based this approach on Thomas's theorem (Merton 2002) and on Max Weber's approach to history based on his understanding of sociology (Takó 2020, 43–64). It is important to note that in interpreting the empirical data, I have taken Weber's epistemological approach as a guide

(Weber 1998; 2020). The same approach was applied to the definition of Gypsy in historical documents; those who were classified as Gypsies by officials in their reports and decrees were also treated as Gypsies. I have used the word Gypsy consistently throughout the article, as it was the designation used by non-Gypsy functionaries during the period under investigation. I would like to make it clear that my research focused on the non-Gypsy bureaucracy, not on the history of the Gypsy population in Hungary.

With one exception, the word Roma did not appear in the archival material, and it was a reference to self-identification. The term Gypsy was used mainly to refer to Roma living in abject poverty, sometimes including non-Roma who had married into or lived in Roma settlements. It is worth noting here that when officials used the term Gypsy settlements, they meant impoverished settlements where most of the inhabitants were Roma. Gypsy settlements were sharply differentiated from, for example, cave dwellings or old barrack dwellings inhabited by non-Gypsies. In other words, the terms Gypsy and Gypsy settlement were understood to refer to a social problem that was predominantly Roma. There was practically no mention of Roma intelligentsia or Roma movements, which had been steadily growing during the socialist era, or of an integrated Roma population. Overall, I use the words Gypsy and Gypsy settlement because they more accurately express who the bureaucracy's documents were about and to whom its measures applied.

Finally, another term should be clarified; in this study, I use the word "nationality" in relation to the Hungarian Gypsies, because the term "ethnicity" was not in use at that time. It started to appear in documents sporadically from the second half of the 1970s. In the first decades of the socialist era, the main criterion for nationality was not whether a given minority had a mother country or not, but whether it had linguistic and cultural characteristics. The Roma in Hungary were not recognised as a nationality, not because they did not have a mother country, but because their language and culture were not considered uniform or mature enough to be treated as a nationality, and therefore their forced assimilation became a desired goal (Szesztay 2003; Balogh 2002).

## 2. The Execution of Sectorial Gypsy Policy (Antecedent)

After their complete takeover of power, the communist single-party state waited a decade before formulating their central Gypsy policy. The so-called Gypsy question remained defined as it had been during the Horthy period (the historical period named after Miklós Horthy, regal Governor/Regent of Hungary, which lasted from 1920 to 1944 in Hungary) as one of public health and public security. Without any central directives, the various ministries acted as they saw fit and maintained previous practices of exclusion. Despite the new communist regime's loud rejection of the Horthy period, it often continued policies

formulated during that period and executed them nationwide. Beginning in the 1940s, during the Horthy period, some townships issued Gypsy identification papers in order to help the work of the gendarmerie, and censuses of Gypsies by the authorities under the Ministry of the Interior were fairly regular; these were termed Gypsy raids (Balogh-Ebner 2015; Hajnáczy 2019b; 2020a; Karsai 1992). In 1950, the Ministry of the Interior introduced black identification cards for wandering Gypsies and ordered a Gypsy census. According to the Ministry of the Interior's 1953 census, there were 186 Gypsy settlements in BAZ county, where almost fourteen thousand Gypsies lived, yet they were unable to find even one wandering band of Gypsies in the whole county (Purcsi 2004, 256–259). In the 1958 county census, there was nomadic activity in most townships, but the amount of activity was deemed insignificant (Hajnáczy 2016a). Despite such public declarations, the plans to regularise the situation of the wandering Gypsies remained on the agenda of the northern Hungarian county councils. It was at such a meeting that thoughts reminiscent of the previous but at the same time maligned period, such as the following, were expressed:

Wandering Gypsies need to be forced to do labour: This is the most serious problem, because radical administrative measures are needed. A camp needs to be made for them, where they have to work. This is especially important for the education of the young vagrants. Those committed to vagrancy need to be purged from the township (like Budapest did with its shady characters) (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.).

Any Gypsy still unable to ensure the proper living conditions for his family, still finding his freely chosen work hard to do, I would find it proper that such a slacker receive corrective educational punishment in appropriate custody and be forced to work, and thus be made to get used to work in addition to earning an appropriate wage for the work completed from which his family would have their needs met (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.).

Those incorrigible vagrants and wandering Gypsies need to be forced to do corrective and educational work through judicial and police means. This is to be used as an educational method. This can only be executed if a workplace for them is ensured, and if the employing companies do not definitively exclude them from employment, as has often happened in recent years (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

The Ministry of Health, much like the Ministry of the Interior, continued the measures it had employed from the previous Horthy period, now much disparaged and held in contempt. Gypsy settlements were monitored as a health risk and a target for lice extermination and disinfection campaigns. Those in authority during the previous period had regularly neglected these steps, however in the new socialist era and in the latter half of the 1950s, regularised and enforced forced bathing were implemented and thought to have preventative effects (Bernáth 2002; Hajnáczy 2016b, 24–25). Wandering Gypsies were seen as a threat not only to public security but to public health in BAZ county:

The difficulty in ending the spread of lice is made very difficult by the wandering nomadic lifestyle of the Gypsies and their very low level of health culture. We ascertain that the influx of lice and its threat as an epidemic comes mainly from Gypsies who are always nomadic or wander in mainly from Szabolcs-Szatmár county but also Hajdú-Bihar county (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

There were townships in the county where the public health authorities disinfected the Gypsy settlements every two weeks (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.). By the second half of the 1950s, lice ceased to be a problem in 31% of the 239 Gypsy settlements, in 47 % periodically, while in 22 % it was a permanent problem for some individuals. The director of the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Public Health and Epidemiology Station stated in one of his reports towards the end of the 50s that owing to the measures taken "There are no lice ridden Gypsy settlements" (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

The Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party first placed Gypsies on their agenda for discussion in December 1955. The party apparatus lacked any serious knowledge or statistics concerning the issue and therefore asked for reports from other central and county authorities. Not only did they ask for a report from the leadership of BAZ county, but they sent out a study committee from the Ministry of People's Education to survey the conditions in the county (Feitl 2008, 258–259). The BAZ county report was relatively short and its presentation of the social conditions of the Gypsy population living there and their internal stratification was far from extensive.

According to the county report, the almost 15,000 strong Gypsy population in BAZ county lived in Gypsy settlements, where "they lived their own peculiar lives, separated, and on the outer peripheries of towns and villages," making a poor existence from odd jobs, while most of their children did not attend school (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ő. e.). Less than a quarter of the Gypsy populace had permanent employment at a company or factory, or had their children attending school, with only a few exceptions. In summary, the report concluded that it was this less than a quarter "who live in orderly conditions, and have their homes, lifestyle and dress in conformity with the requirements of our socialist lives" (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ő. e.). The report presented those Gypsies living dispersed among the non-Gypsies, a small fraction of the Gypsy population, as the most positive, stressing that in terms of lifestyle and social conditions, they do not differ from their environment, "their lifestyle and behaviour, dress, meeting the requirements" (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ő. e.).

After the reports from the authorities and data given by the counties called upon arrived, a proposal was drafted "for the ordering of the Gypsy question" (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ő. e.). According to the draft, almost 130 thousand Gypsies lived in Hungary, 10 % of whom lived in the county in ques-

tion. The proposal overly emphasized the public order and public health aspects of the question and painted a dire picture of Hungary's Gypsies' housing, educational, and employment situation. It is important to note that they did comment on the stratification of the Gypsy population, even if this was limited to a few sentences. Similarly to the BAZ county report, integration was not understood to mean the complete abandonment of Gypsy culture, in fact the document stated that "public education organisations should support the Gypsies' valuable folk culture" (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ó. e.). There was a change in the documentation of the central authorities in this area from 1957 onward, up until 1961, when Gypsy culture, traditions, and language were officially written off and condemned (Hajnáczy 2020b, 49–59; Sággy 2008, 288–301).

The proposal for the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party formulated organizational directives for the Ministers' Council and for county, township, and settlement councils. The Ministers' Council was entrusted with the coordination of the question, and at the level of the county councils, there were to be so-called separate Gypsy groups to be formed within the executive committee in those counties with sizeable Gypsy populations; in the rest an official was to be tasked with the responsibility. For townships, the draft also recommended the previous organisational modification, while at the town level, there was to be an individual responsible within the respective executive committee. The proposal, though, never found its way onto the agenda of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers' Party table (MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 91/1956/85. ó. e.), and so centrally-coordinated action and the necessary directives ordering new measures on the part of the counties did not materialise. That is to say that the various counties continued to act as they saw fit or did nothing to improve the impoverished conditions of the Gypsy populace (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8 1. d.).

Progress on the part of county councils was first made after the initiative by "comrades of Gypsy ancestry" and in the form of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation, formed in October 1957 (Szesztay 2003, 138–139). The newly formed association's statutes and rules of operation (Hajnáczy 2019a, 97–102) placed serious emphasis on effective cooperation with higher authorities and on having initiatives put into place at a county level in the interest of improving the living conditions of the Gypsy populace, as stated in the following:

The Federation shall organise county Gypsy committees at various county seats where the state organs and popular organisations and Gypsies can delegate a representative each. This committee will work in close cooperation with the councils and the local popular organisations. It will organise the National Gypsy Council, whose members are the leaders of county, state, academic organs and the associations' committees (Hajnáczy 2019a, 102).

Only a fraction of the original ideas were put into practice, though a network of county coordinators was set up. However, these were unable to exert any influence whatsoever (Sághy 2008, 281). In April 1958, the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation indicated to the BAZ county leadership that they would contact them at the beginning of May in order to confer on the situation of the county Gypsy populace. The county though had hardly any data concerning the question, and so the head of the County Council's Executive Committee immediately sent a directive to the councils of townships and cities with township status and all other competent organs to prepare a report, and they set the deadline for ten days later (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.). The following quotation is an illustrative example of the haste and desperate urgency caused the head of the Executive Committee by the approach of a central organisation,

I inform the above addressed comrades that in the near future the situation of the Gypsies in the county will be discussed at the county seat with the attendance of national organs. To the above we are in need of concrete data for each county, [...]. The report – for lack of time – is to be delivered to the address of our Secretariat by the given deadline (4 May 1958), without the expectation of any prompting (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.).

The report was to be prepared by the functionaries based on the following points provided: to enumerate the population of the Gypsy populace and mention their housing, health, employment, and social conditions, and to provide a proposal for a solution to these issues. The BAZ County Council did have some information on the conditions of the Gypsies living in the county, but the issue never found its way onto the Council's agenda. Mária László, the first secretary of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation sent a letter in August 1958 to the county:

Let me inquire concerning the Gypsy issue discussed when we were there in person, and which the Ex. Comm. was to discuss as a point of order as to what progress has been made. All counties as of this September will have discussed this issue as a point of order. We ask then – as so few counties remain – to take the initiative and have the county put this upon their agenda as a point of order and to invite the competent offices (education, health, employment) party organs, internal affairs and popular organs. Be so kind as to send the material of the debate beforehand (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.).

Mária László's letter urging action was replied to negatively; the County Council's Executive Committee was unable to put the Gypsy issue on the agenda for debate as the individual responsible for the case was on vacation until the beginning of September (MNL BAZML XXIII-12a 1455/1958.). A dramatic change had taken place in the appraisal of the importance of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association in the northern Hungarian county; in April 1958,



they were willing to do everything asked in the shortest of time. A few months later, someone's vacation time was enough for them to avoid any action and disregard any directive. Mária László had been losing authority and prestige within the single party state from the spring of 1958 onward, the reason being she was not leading the association in the same direction as the ideological trends among those in power seemed to be headed. And in November, after a long campaign to discredit her, she was removed from her post as first secretary and was replaced by individuals who would comply and execute fully the state directives (Hajnáczy 2019a, 67–96; Sággy 2008, 278–295). It is probable that the change in leadership personnel in the Association was a contributing factor to the higher official organs in BAZ county ignoring the situation of Gypsies at their meeting for years to come. There was though a relatively longer report sent to the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation in August 1959, which did contain proposals and was mainly the summary of reports from townships and a few offices and cities. In the accompanying letter, they admitted to neglecting the debate on the situation of the Gypsies as a separate point of order, but made the excuse that from time to time the County Council's Executive Committee had dealt with the issue (MNL OL XXIII-M-8. 1. d.).

The Ministry of Education held a meeting in November 1959, at which Sándor Vendégh, the head of the National Minorities Office, gave a presentation titled Current Questions Concerning Timely Tasks Among Hungary's Gypsy Populace (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point). The meeting was held, with the participation of related ministries and social organisations, in the interest of formulating a central concept "related to the Gypsy question, still unsolved theoretical and practical questions". Sándor Vendégh began his speech by calling attention to the assertion that many view Gypsies as a separate nationality and hold the strengthening of Gypsy national identity as key. He went on to state that the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association began its work with just such an approach and argued for it and took measures towards reinforcing this idea (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point). Vendégh condemned these previous attitudes and dismissed them, stating that "these false directives are the reason why in some county council workers we still encounter this anti-marxist understanding of the Gypsy question" (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point). He did though praise the efforts of the county councils to date:

The county councils have recognised the importance of this question and have analysed the situation of the Gypsy populace living in their county and are dealing with employment possibilities for them. They are preparing plans containing constructive suggestions (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point).

The head of the Nationalities Office detailed the burning daily concerns of the Gypsy populace and the necessary measures needed to solve them and referred

to the northern Hungarian county several times as a type of negative example. For example, he mentioned the far-above-average infant mortality and the instances of tuberculosis (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point).

This cited speech did not go unnoticed, in fact it was published in the Ministry of Education's magazine titled *Tájékoztató* (Informative) (Vendég 1960). The significance of this was that after many years of silence, the single party state publicly clarified its position concerning the Gypsy question, not only to an elite confidential circle but disseminated so the wider public could learn the thinking of those in power. A few years later, several points and concepts became manifest in the wording of the first party resolutions relating to the Gypsies (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. ő. e.). Furthermore, as it was sent to all county councils, it can be dated as the point in time when in effect the county councils began to deal with the situation of Gypsies according to central directives. Sándor Ferkovics, the head of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Association, sent the following letter, along with the script of the presentation by Vendég, to the leadership of BAZ county:

We ask that you help solve the Gypsy problem in your region accordingly, naturally taking into account the local particularities. We do not want to use a template for solving the problems, but it is necessary to use the whole spirit of the document as a starting point and begin to take measures to resolve this question (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

Another positive outcome of the meeting held at the Ministry of Education was the establishment of a "national Gypsy committee" (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.), in which the related ministries and social organisations took part. The committee was given the task of working out a draft proposal for the higher levels of decision making and to compile the necessary data for it. Sándor Ferkovics had sent a letter in January 1960 to, amongst others, BAZ county, in which he called upon the leading functionaries to write their opinions on the material sent the previous December. Furthermore, he asked for a report containing a survey of the county conditions and the effects of the measures taken by the County Council's Executive Committee. The northern Hungarian county was unable to comply with the request, as it had yet to grant the Gypsy populace a full point of order on its meeting agenda (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

At the repeated behest of the central authorities, the county in question finally began to prepare its report in hopes that after years of ignoring the issue, the leadership of the county would put the situation of the Gypsy populace on its agenda for discussion and promulgate a resolution aimed at improving the situation. The report by the Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Public Health and Epidemiology Station stated that 23,500 Gypsies lived in 239 Gypsy settlements, often without the most basic of necessities. A portion of the Gypsy settlements

were located on swampland, many locations lacked outhouses and a supply of drinking water, and the removal of waste was mostly unsolved (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.). For these reasons, the Construction and Transportation Office argued for the dispersal of the Gypsy populace and suggested the elimination of the Gypsy settlements:

The first task would be the elimination of the separate settlements and the placement of every Gypsy family in an appropriate field of work, and at a distance from each other, so that they would be dependent on melting into their new environment and without the opportunity of continuing their old lives (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

This was an example of the principles set forth by Sándor Vendégh, who in his presentation stated that in the future, Gypsies should not create new Gypsy settlements or Gypsy quarters but should be dispersed throughout the non-Gypsy populace. He explicitly mentioned and condemned the opinion in northern Hungarian counties that Gypsies need to be settled in one area (MNL OL XXVIII-M-8. 1. d. 3. point).

The Workforce Allocation Office took a survey, completed in 1958, and appraised the number of Gypsies living in the county to be about 25 thousand, among whom almost 16 thousand were of working age, but only a small portion had permanent employment. According to the report, the main reason for this was that the factories and plants were not willing to employ Gypsies, citing their so-called wanton lifestyle. In addition to this, the attitude of the non-Gypsy workforce was mentioned:

The rest of the workers are averse to having Gypsy workers, they do not accept them in their work brigades because of their weak performance. Their presence brings a large threat of uncleanness and infection. No one wants to live with them in the common hostel (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

This office saw the solution in ensuring work for Gypsies in line with their traditions and customs, in cottage industries or in the form of a cooperative, which was in line with the directive put forth by Sandor Vendégh (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

The Ministry of Education noted their success in the schooling of Gypsy children, however it had to admit that the majority only completed the first three or four grades. Many were absent from school in the winter months, owing to a lack of adequate clothing, and because of the missed material they had to repeat the grade. In several schools, separate classes were formed for those students who were above average age for their grade level, though the reasons were not only ones of teaching methodology:

In several places, for the reasons that the hygiene of the Gypsy students poses serious problems, they have tried to create so-called over-aged classes, where they collect exclusively the Gypsy students. [...] Working parents in several locations rightfully point to the immoral speech of the over-aged Gypsy students, their neglected clothing, which has a detrimental effect on the raising of small children (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

It is important to note that in the last lines of the report, the Educational Office agreed with Sándor Vendégh's opinion that the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation was unable to produce any significant results, and that because of the Federation's existence, the work of county council organs in this area is very important (MNL BAZML XXIII-3/a 243/1962.).

Following a few years of preparatory work, the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee issued the resolution on "tasks related to the improvement of the situation of the Gypsy populace" on 20 June 1961 (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. ő. e.). The aim of those composing the resolution was in part to lay the foundations for the single party state's Gypsy policy, one of forced assimilation, and to converge into one direction the various measures of county councils and organisations to this aim. The document judged the county initiatives of the previous years as follows:

In the last years, the county executive committees have studied and debated the situation of the Gypsy populace living in their regions and have dealt with the possibility of their re-education and prepared plans containing numerous constructive proposals and measures. Yet – on some occasions – there have been inappropriate violent measures taken (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. ő. e.).

The party resolution estimated the Gypsy population in Hungary to be above two hundred thousand, and in terms of housing and employment, classified them into three groups, creating the "integrated", the "in the process of integrating", and the "not integrated" categories (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. ő. e.). They set the full employment of Gypsies as a goal, as well as raising their level of schooling and the earliest possible elimination of Gypsy settlements. The Political Committee's resolution decreed that the Gypsy populace of Hungary was not a nationality and any measures to that effect were deemed to be detrimental, as they prevented the "integration" of the Gypsy populace. It recognised the efforts of the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation in mobilising county councils and social organisations as per this question but found it to be inadequate for the task of re-educating the Gypsy populace and condemned it to dissolution. It saw the main path forward for the forced assimilation of the Gypsy populace in the consistent prohibition of the traditional way of Gypsy existence and their incorporation into the work of heavy industry, as well as in the elimination of Gypsy settlements and the dispersal of the Gypsies among the non-Gypsy population (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. ő. e.).

### 3. The Execution of Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy

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The vice-president of the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant government issued a decree in November 1961 – in accordance with the party resolution – in which he called the county councils' attention to the position the Political Committee had taken and the resolution it had promulgated relating to the situation of the Gypsies in Hungary. In the interest of the immediate execution of the directive, the vice-president defined measures to be taken in several fields by higher authorities. One of the most notable of these was the dissolution of the organisational units created previously and responsible for Gypsies. This task was given to the standing committee of the county's educational office. The vice-president's decree also prescribed that the educational committees prepare a report on the "future plans for the solution of the Gypsy question" by March 1962 and submit it to the Executive Committee; the presidents of the county councils were to take steps to ensure the lower levels of administration were informed and constantly supervised (Hajnáczy 2013, 245–247).

The Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County Council's Executive Committee's Education Office acted in accordance with the above directives and prepared a working document titled Long Term Plans for the Solution of Tasks Related to the Underdeveloped Levels of the Gypsy Populace. This draft was put on the agenda of the Executive Committee of March 1962 (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 58/1962.). At the meeting, the vice-president of the County Council's Executive Committee – according to the official minutes – took the effort to call attention to the fact that the proposal had been prepared in accordance with the resolutions by the higher party authorities, and he suggested its supplementation:

The report on the table before the Executive Committee was prepared on the basis of the Political Committee and the governments resolutions, its goal being progress towards the solutions of the problems of the estimated 28,000 member Gypsy population [...]. It suggests the draft be supplemented stating that the leadership of councils and the state corporations, state farms and local party and popular organisations handle the Gypsy question in accordance with the Political Committees and Governments resolutions (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 58/1962.).

The long-term plan was based mainly on earlier reports and gave a relatively brief summary of the situation of the Gypsy population living in the county and drew the conclusion that difficulties were to be found in several areas: in employment, education, and housing (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 58/1962.). Following this, the draft noted the measures the Executive Committee held as necessary, in "the spirit of the Party and Government resolutions". Regarding the elimination of Gypsy settlements, it held that in five years, 30 % were to be eliminated, and during this process access to free housing plots would be relied upon to a high degree. It prescribed that the health authorities increase their educational

work in Gypsy settlements, create a council coordinating system, and take steps to decrease infant mortality. In the area of employment, the plan ordered companies "to accept in the spirit of the party decision the Gypsies applying for work, or directed to them" (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 58/1962.). Furthermore, manpower agencies responsible for allotting work power were told to send Gypsies and non-Gypsies equally. The draft decreed that traditional Gypsy trades (e. g., pot repair, basket weaving, burning bricks) were to be put into cooperatives in the interest of stopping wandering. Ending illiteracy, which was very common among the Gypsy populace, was set as a goal in education, and the completion of elementary school by Gypsy children was another goal, even if it meant the creation of over-aged classes (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 58/1962.).

In March 1963, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party's Central Committee's Political Committee did its first review of the results of the Gypsy policy it had put into place a few years earlier, the execution of the party resolution, and the accompanying experience. The following summary and evaluation given of the county councils' work and measures towards the aims was tabled at the meeting:

Since the resolution of the Political Committee the improvement of the situation of the Gypsy populace is dealt with primarily within the state apparatus. The county councils prepared long term plans, but their execution makes only halting progress because of limited financial and employment possibilities. In the relatively short time substantial change has not happened (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1963/293. ő. e.).

As the report went through the various areas, it was only able to give account of little progress; the number of Gypsies with permanent employment had hardly increased, and children had been enrolled in school but there had not been any real progress in decreasing illiteracy. The most serious problems lay in the elimination of Gypsy settlements, and it was only at this point that the highest levels of party leadership learned that there was no opportunity for free housing plots and that those targeted could not meet the loan requirements of the OTP bank. Therefore, the Political Committee ordered the competent ministries and higher-level authorities to develop a plan for the soonest possible elimination of Gypsy settlements (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1963/293. ő. e.). The Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government issued resolution 2014/1964, concerning the "elimination of settlements without acceptable social conditions" (MNL OL XIX-A-83-b 2014/1964 367. d.), and in this decree, laid the groundwork for the CS (lower value) housing program. This directive was accompanied by governmental resolution 3162/1964, marked as "confidential case file", which contained the higher authorities' instructions and ideological considerations. It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Construction was to prepare a survey of the "settlements without acceptable social conditions" that year

(MNL OL-XIX-A-83-b 3162/1964. 351. d.). The result of the nationwide examination of all settlements was to show that in the settlements falling under the jurisdiction of the resolution, almost 49 thousand of the homes could hardly be classified as constructed housing. More than 55 thousand families inhabited these dwellings, amounting to more than 220 thousand people. The survey went on to reveal that among the counties, BAZ had the most impoverished settlements, with 4792 dwellings housing 5514 families, equalling 25,631 individuals. The related ministries, together with other state organs, planned the elimination of these settlements, and created a timetable for doing so, which gave priority to the elimination of Gypsy settlements found in the vicinity of tourist locations, in order that they no longer be visible to tourists or the prying eyes of western journalists (Hajnáczy 2017; 2020b). The Ministry of Construction and the Finance Ministry issued a joint decree no. 2/1965 in February 1965 towards the aim of implementing the government's decision, in which they finalised the details of the CS (low value) housing program. Individuals with at least two years of continuous employment, with earnings exceeding 1000 forint per month, who were able to pay for at least 10 % of the construction costs, and who lived in the settlements under the jurisdiction of the resolution were eligible to participate in the CS housing program. The relevant council were to provide them with a free housing plot, and the architectural plans were also provided for free by the Ministry of Construction. Furthermore, those choosing the program received a 31-year interest free loan to be repaid in equal monthly instalments, and for those who maintained permanent employment up to 12 thousand forints of the debt could be cancelled. These measures were found in the co-resolution of the Ministry of Construction and Finance Ministry no. 5/1965. (II. 18.) on the elimination of settlements without adequate social conditions (Anon 1966, 368–371).

The Executive Committee of the Ministers' Council discussed the experiences of executing the Long-Term Plan and the growing number of difficulties became apparent at the meeting, including the lethargy of the council apparatus. The report tabled at the meeting concluded that no significant progress had been made towards the elimination of Gypsy settlements. The only thing that seemed to have taken place was the construction of toilets and garbage storage, or the council wiring electricity out to the settlement. The settlements continued to be as unfit for habitation as they had been previously, and the conditions just as bad for those living there.

The number of lice-ridden settlements had decreased, but of the 379 settlements, vermin spreading infection can still be found in 140–150 settlements. [...] 8–10 % of the county's Gypsy populace suffer from incurable illnesses. There are many with tuberculosis and infectious diseases, which is due in part to the unhealthy environment and living conditions in the settlements (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 71/1964.).

The leadership of the county enthusiastically welcomed government resolution no. 2014/1964, as it saw it as the only solution to a hopeless situation. There was a decrease in infant mortality following the educational work and supervision of the health authorities in the Gypsy settlements. However, there were misunderstandings and differences of opinion that often led to violence and discord: "There are times when they commit acts that seriously threaten the physical wellbeing of the health workers" (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 71/1964.). It is important to note that the Public Health and Epidemiology Station's workers were regularly accompanied by armed enforcement who ensured forced bathing; these functionaries were not averse to using violence and humiliating the inhabitants of the Gypsy settlements (Bernáth 2002; Bernáth & Polyák 2001). There was some progress in the area of employment, and the Gypsy populace reached 30 % permanent employment, while 25–30 % had temporary employment. Many were only able to find work far from their homes, and owing to a lack of education, were only used as unskilled laborers. They worked mostly in the construction industry, in industrial plants, and in farming; only a fraction were members of farming cooperatives. The main educational problem was no longer school enrolment but the high number of those having to repeat grades and the very small number who continued their education in secondary school or trade school. In order to help the illiterate adult population, courses were organised, but almost half of those enrolled did not complete the course (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 71/1964.). In the light of these results, it is not surprising that the resolution reached at the end of the meeting cast serious doubt on the effectiveness of the measures taken to date:

We establish the fact that the long-term plan adopted on 21 March 1962 for the improvement of the situation of the Gypsy populace is being successfully executed in several areas. [...] The progress though is far from satisfactory. There remains much to be done in the area of their employment, housing problems, and relating to their health and cultural situation (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 71/1964.).

A few months after the Ministry of Construction and the Finance Ministry enacted co-directive no. 2/1965 and the housing program's tasks were assigned by the central authorities, the leadership of BAZ county made the method of eliminating settlements without acceptable social conditions a separate point on its agenda. The meeting was quick to discuss the county leadership's worries concerning the elimination of the Gypsy settlements; they felt the first problem was that the housing allowance slated for the county was small. The vice-president of the Executive Committee stated the following at the meeting:

I am of the opinion the allowance numbers are only sufficient to solve 20–22 % of the problem. This is insufficient. He tells the Executive Committee that more than 10 % of



the country's Gypsy population lives in Borsod, and so it would be right if therefore 10% of the number of houses being built were guaranteed to Borsod county (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 74/1965.).

They called upon the council president to appeal to the Ministry of Construction in the interest of increasing the amount of the allowance. The housing allowance for 1965 was 800 (Kovács 1974, 46), and of this amount 70 were allotted to the northern Hungarian county by the ministry. Most of these were to be used to eliminate the cave homes in Tibolddaróc. It is worth noting that in the following twenty years the elimination of cave dwellings occupied by non-Gypsy inhabitants was always a higher priority than the Gypsy settlements (Hajnáczy 2017). The other problem was that many living in the Gypsy settlements were unable to meet the conditions required by the CS housing program decree. Almost 250 families were not eligible for the program because they did not have permanent employment. The Employment Office was ordered to immediately prepare a survey of the unemployed families and to offer a proposal for their employment. Another problem was the CS housing program only providing loans for home construction, and so the added cost of extending utilities to the new houses fell upon the councils who did their best to avoid these (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 74/1965.).

The county's execution of the 20 June 1965 resolution by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee's Political Committee was a subject for debate at the northern Hungarian county's May 1965 leadership meeting. The County Party's Executive Committee's report was prepared in the spirit of the party decision, and this was duly noted by one of the functionaries. For the most part, the report was a summary of the matter of previous meetings and did not provide new information on housing, employment or schooling of the Gypsies living in the county, nor the measures taken. According to the minutes of the meeting, the talk revolved about the single party state's new direction in this matter and acknowledgement of the party decision, without any words of criticism being uttered:

The situation of the Gypsies is a serious social issue, and it is not an accident that our party is dealing with this problem. [...] Since the Political Committee's resolution, significant changes have taken place. [...] After the Central Committee's resolution, work progresses in the right direction (MNL BAZML XXXV-1 6. folder).

There were comments that revealed complaints from some participants at the meeting, such as someone mentioning that though company leaderships support and agree with the Political Committee's resolution, lower levels of administration do not take it into account and continue to discriminate against Gypsy

workers. The council apparatus was blamed for either not knowing the party decision sufficiently or disregarding it:

In my opinion, at the town level, the party organisation and the council did not take into regard nor deal with this question as something very important and a task awaiting a solution. They know that there is such a resolution, they know that they have to be integrated into society, but this approach is still a distant one for them (MNL BAZML XXXV-1 6. folder).

In response to the comments made, the township party committees were again ordered to reread the party decision and to begin to execute its directives, and the media was ordered to deal more with this question (MNL BAZML XXXV-1 6. folder).

In the second half of the 1960s, unlike BAZ county so far, there were national organisations and a few competent experts who argued for the modification of the 1961 party decision (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1966/56. ő. e. MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1966/57. ő. e.); the state's administrative bodies had their concerns over organisational questions, while the experts criticized the resolutions' ideological side (Anon 1969). After several discussions with higher authorities, the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasants' Government created the Interministerial Coordination Committee with resolution no. 3347/1968. Its task was to direct the work of the council bodies and help effective cooperation with social organisations (MNL OL XIX-A-83-b 3347/1968. 426. d.). After a few years, BAZ county created a County Coordination Committee based upon the model of the national organisation. It comprised all the offices of the County Council's Executive Committee, and the public prosecutor and armed authorities were also represented (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 94/170.). In some locations, city and township executive committees created their own coordination committees to work alongside the County Coordination Committee (Füzes et al. 2005, 97–98).

Despite the initiatives having begun, keeping the question on the agenda seemed not to be a priority in BAZ county, as its higher levels of leadership neglected to meaningfully deal with Gypsies' situation for almost a decade after the mid 1960s. This was in part due to the County Coordination Committee becoming the main caretaker of the Gypsy question. In addition to this, the focus on both the county and the national level was turning to the elimination of the Gypsy settlements (Hajnáczky 2017; MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 86/1968.; MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 93/1970.; MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 95/1970.; MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 99/1971.). It can be assumed that in this period the overall direction was dictated by the state authorities, their resolutions, positions and the Future Plans, as well as the county resolutions.

When the Agitation and Propaganda Committee met in June 1974, it confronted the same problems it had previously:

Though the situation of the Gypsy populace has improved, it can be ascertained that the pace of progress is not satisfactory, the problems have continued to grow in parallel to any progress, and their social effects have become considerable. The reason for this is that the rate of their reproduction is significantly greater than the effect of the measures aimed at improving their situation (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1974/226. ő. e.).

Almost a decade and a half after the party issued its resolution in 1961, those in power reiterated that the Gypsies were not to be seen as a nationality, and there was to be no consideration given to a Gypsy federation, Gypsy press, Gypsy theatre, or education in the Gypsy language. The report by the Agitation and Propaganda Committee cited in part the Gypsy research by István Kemény and detailed at length the problems with employment, housing, and education, and then gave instructions to various organs (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1974/226. ő. e.).

A few months after the Agitation and Propaganda Committee issued its report, the County Council dealt with the issue; the Council vice-president opened the agenda with the following words of worry and spoke of the changes to the living conditions of the Gypsy populace:

The most visible consequence of the social and economic development is the extremely high level of differentiation that has taken place among the Gypsy populace. This is characteristic of the standard of living, the attitude towards work, the regional aspects. Their situation and living conditions are very different in industrial and non-industrial environments. [...] In terms of the county to national numerical ratio, despite the progress, they remain the source of a great amount of concern and tasks (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 21/1974.).

It took almost two decades following the single party state definition of its Gypsy policy for the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee to compose a new resolution concerning the situation of the Gypsy populace. It was 18 April 1979 when they again conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Gypsies' situation in Hungary and examined the past twenty years' developments. The report tabled at the meeting, at least according to the minutes, was prepared with much forethought and work. The suggestions gathered from competent authorities were based on asking several hundred questions, in addition to consulting with the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee and County Coordination Committees who reviewed the material. The report was able to give accounts of numerous positive developments, "however these did not equally affect the entire Gypsy populace" (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1979/770. ő. e.), and newer difficulties had arisen, or existing problems had changed in nature. According to the report, since the 1961 party resolution, the number of Gypsy men with permanent employment had tripled and, in some places, had reached 90 %. Most of these workers, however, were

only able to find jobs as unskilled labourers, and so-called Gypsy jobs evolved, which meant especially hard, dirty work. The aversion to hiring Gypsies in certain fields stubbornly persisted, and the authorities impotently watched the high degree of unemployment among the Gypsy youth. In the area of education, the school enrolment of Gypsy children had succeeded, and those moving into the higher elementary grades had grown by a few percent, as had those finishing elementary school, but this growth was no more than 10–15 %. The percentage of the Gypsy populace living in Gypsy settlements had fallen to 25 %, and almost 16 thousand CS houses had been subsidised during the program; another 8 thousand families had been provided housing through other means. The elimination of Gypsy settlements far from progressed at the desired rate, owing to the significantly increasing construction costs exceeding the loan amounts, and a portion of the councils encumbering the elimination of these settlements. The recognition of the Gypsies as a nationality had still not taken place, though after long debates, they were classified as an ethnic group in the process of assimilation. Those researchers and Gypsy intelligentsia who argued for the recognition of Gypsies as a nationality were derided and accused of “neo-leftist demagoguery and nationalism” (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 5/1979/770. ö. e.).

In accordance with the resolutions and directives of the higher authorities, the BAZ County Council made the Gypsies' situation a separate point of order in September 1979. Upon reading the report, the leading functionaries at the meeting were confronted with the same issues as those confronted by the Political Committee of the Central Committee. In summary, the material contained the following:

Their social integration shows increasing differentiation and therefore new, previously unforeseen problems have appeared. The measures taken and the generally positive tendencies have not uniformly affected the Gypsy population of our county (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

The report primarily pointed out that about 17–18 % of the Gypsy population in Hungary lived in the one county – in total, more than sixty thousand individuals. That is to say, in almost twenty years, their numbers had doubled owing to the high rate of births, which had increased further in the Gypsy settlements, and to a smaller extent migration from other counties (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

The number of the Gypsy settlements had decreased from 318 to 190 since the 1961 party resolution. Almost twenty-two thousand Gypsies lived in these settlements. This was an improvement, but as the report indicated, there were new issues to deal with. The elimination of the settlements did not succeed in decreasing the degree of segregation. The CS-housing program homes were often built in a settlement-like grouping, and in the cities, Gypsy courtyards and

Gypsy stairwells evolved. Behind these new phenomena was the non-Gypsy populace's aversion towards the Gypsy inhabitants and the real or imagined conflicts of cohabitation. Home purchase with the help of the CS housing allowance did not meet expectations. The loan amounts were often only enough to purchase homes that were run down, which soon turned slum-like and became uninhabitable, or homes located in the county's remote towns, where the only job opportunities meant commuting. The elimination of the Gypsy settlements was still hindered by numerous factors, in some places, the local councils were unable to provide free housing plots for those applying or did not have enough funds to expand their public utilities infrastructure. Many Gypsy settlement inhabitants did not meet the required prerequisites for the CS housing program, and the high birth rate of the Gypsies in the settlements, and therefore the fast generational exchange, exceeded the capacity and pace of the local housing program and its parameters. The public health directives aimed at improving the conditions in the Gypsy settlements had remained almost ineffectual for the past twenty years. Public wells had been built, though often of bad quality, but latrines, waste disposal, and sewage remained unsolved issues (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

The bare statistics show significant progress in the area of employment following the 1961 party resolution and action taken by the county council, however new problems arose. At the beginning of the 1960s, almost 20 % of Gypsy men and an insignificant percentage of Gypsy women had permanent employment; by the second half of the 1970s, this had grown to 65 % of Gypsy men and 24 % of Gypsy women. It was a problem that Gypsies working in industry could only do jobs for unskilled labourers due in part to a lack of skill training; only 8–10 % were able to work as tradesmen and 15 % as trained workers. Most Gypsies employed as unskilled labourers were employed in jobs other workers did not want. So-called Gypsy trades evolved in certain fields (e. g., garbage collectors, street sweepers), and at that time one mainly found Gypsy workers employed for those tasks. In addition to frequent changes in places of employment, the employment of the next generation was becoming a burning issue, a solution to which were the military draft and the placement of young Gypsy men in work corps (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

The county leadership only had partial success in the area of education; the statistics again showed marked improvement, but this was far from the full truth of the situation. The enrolment of Gypsy children in the educational system increased but the dropout rate and the number of those given reprieve remained high. Gypsy children were not admitted to kindergartens because there was a lack of places, and this impeded their school progress. In the 365 towns in BAZ county, 196 lacked kindergartens. The complete lack of kindergartens could not be compensated for with the 192-hour school preparatory activities. The number of Gypsy classes grew considerably, and in the second half of the 1970s, there

were 48 in the county. The official position was that after successfully completing grade four, the students could be placed in mixed classes. The report though fails to mention if this was carried out at a local level. The targeted rewarding of teachers often remained without effect, and in many places, the additional money was given to teachers without any expectations or extra work (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

It is important to note that in BAZ county, at least according to the report, the ideological directives of the Political Committee and the Agitation and Propaganda Committee were at odds with each other. The resolutions and position of the higher offices was that in no way was the segregation of Gypsies to be supported or initiated. Despite these instructions, the county, in its following central planning period, planned to experiment with the creation of a Gypsy student residence. In fact, Gypsy youth clubs, orchestras, and reading camps for Gypsy children were organised, in addition to presentations, cultural events, and balls exclusively for Gypsies (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 30/1979.).

#### 4. The Criticism of Forced Assimilation Gypsy Policy

The Agitation and Propaganda Committee, relying for the most part on the county reports, examined all the related issues and evaluated the situation of Gypsies in Hungary. The report tabled at the meeting was a strong reminder to the decision makers present of the partial failure of the Gypsy policy over past decades. The fact was that the Gypsy populace had been integrated into the "least qualified strata of society" (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.). In fact, it stated that the positive statistics show the standard of living of Gypsies rising, as had that of the non-Gypsy population, and so the gap between the two had hardly narrowed. The data related to employment were an excellent illustration of the problem, since just over 12 % of the entire population worked as unskilled labourers, among Gypsies this average was over 50 %. In the area of trained workers, the averages were almost the same. However, though almost 30 % of the entire population were tradesmen, only about 8 % of Gypsies found skilled trade jobs (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.). The most visible problem in the progress of Gypsy housing was the increasing degree of segregation; masses of ghettos evolved in towns and cities. In terms of the education of Gypsy children, they concluded that in many cases it only led to the recreation of the "least qualified strata". The report supported the previous assertions concerning the social situation of the Gypsy populace and recorded that almost one quarter of the Gypsy populace lived at an "average standard of living", almost half lived "around subsistence level" and the remaining quarter lived their daily lives in a "severely disadvantaged state" (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.). Those preparing this material warned that the integration of the Gypsy populace into society was not without dangers:

The tasks awaiting the people's economy, the growing complexity of work is something all of society faces – the Gypsy populace, too – and requires higher standards. There is the danger that the Gypsy populace – due to the low level of qualifications and schooling, a weaker state of health etc. – will be less able to meet these standards than the whole population (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.).

The situation of the economy and its weakening at that time posed many threats, and one related to the fact that prejudice towards the Gypsy populace was becoming more deeply imbedded.

The Agitation and Propaganda Committee modified the 1979 party decision and changed the label for the Gypsy populace from “gradually assimilating ethnic group” to “a social and ethnic group with its own culture and traditions” (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.). That is to say that the emphasis changed from assimilation to the active support and recognition of Gypsy culture:

The Gypsy populace may freely choose two modes of integration into our society: by upholding the value and traditions of Gypsy culture worth preserving and the preservation of their ethnic identity, or through voluntary assimilation (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.).

Nonetheless, researchers and Gypsy intelligentsia who held an opposing position to that which was official were still suppressed and their opinions labelled “incompatible with our principles”, “mistaken” or “exaggerated” (MNL OL M-KS-288. f. 41/1984/434. ő. e.). Meanwhile, the ideological changes pushed for by the Agitation and Propaganda Committee's position suggested several measures to help preserve Gypsy culture, the most notable of which were directives for the establishment of a Gypsy museum, a Gypsy Federation, and a newspaper for Gypsies. The Ministers' Council followed suit, and in the interest of execution of the position of the Agitation and Propaganda Committee issued resolution no. 3223/1985 that dealt mainly with improving the educational, employment, and housing conditions, and included several directives aimed at this, in addition to mentioning its support for Gypsy culture. Around this time, some leading functionaries began to openly criticize the ideological basis for the previous decade's policy of forced assimilation and even went on to state that it in fact was incompatible with socialist principles. The Ministry of Education created the Hungarian Gypsy Cultural Federation in 1986, which in turn launched the *Cigány Újság* (Gypsy Newspaper), which published articles in a Gypsy language. Two years later, the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party nullified the lines of the earlier party resolution that had rejected the Gypsies as a nationality (Hajnáczky 2020b, 75–81).

Despite the new centrally issued measures, everything continued as usual in BAZ county until the second half of the 1980s. It was then that the County

Council's Executive Committee replicated the previously mentioned Ministers' Council resolution and issued directions for its execution. Here, too, there were a few lines concerning the support for Gypsy culture (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 193/1985.). Another interesting development was the full-time occupation of family care workers "to help with the social integration of the Gypsy populace" in towns where the number of Gypsies necessitated it and where their social conditions were bad (MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 192/1985.; MNL BAZML XXIII-2a 196/1987.; MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 39/1987.).

In December 1989, that is to say in the weeks following the change of regime, the BAZ County Council held a comprehensive evaluation of the situation of the Gypsy populace for the last time. The coming political and economic changes, the press focus on the Miskolc ghetto case, and the urging of Council members made the question a point or order impossible to avoid. The Miskolc ghetto affair took place in Miskolc (the capital of BAZ county) in 1988–1989. The city government decided to evacuate the Gypsy population living in the slum-like city centre. The plan was to build a segregated settlement for Gypsies on the outskirts of the town in the floodplain of the Sajó river. The initiative provoked considerable protests and the creation of an anti-ghetto committee by civilians, which led to the city council's rejection of the plan (Havasi 2017, 68–71). The head of the council president's office introduced the topic at the meeting with the following pessimistic words:

It is time to expose the true situation, without any false modesty. It has become doubly impossible for the Gypsy populace to remain both outside and inside. [...] The essence of the Gypsy question is that the customary folk order, lifestyle, existence, and folk behavioural patterning have become historically non-continuable and hard to progress beyond (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 41/1989.).

The report established that the population of Gypsies living in the county had almost reached seventy-five thousand individuals and was thus approaching 10 % of the population. It likewise pointed out that the territorial dispersion of Gypsies was unequal, and that villages had evolved with a majority Gypsy population where nothing more than poverty could be counted on:

Their proportion has significantly grown in those small villages, characterised by the non-Gypsy population moving away and aging (e. g., Csenyété 72 %, Beret 54 %, Pusztaradvány 49 %, Kiscséc 76 %, etc). These towns have few or no opportunities for employment, they are without schools or kindergartens in town, and they generally have bad housing conditions. These together make the advancement of the Gypsy population living in these towns difficult (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 41/1989.).

Towards the end of the 1980s, less than 12 % of the Gypsy population lived in the 97 still existing Gypsy settlements. Nonetheless, the CS housing program



remained deeply flawed. The houses were for the most part built in groupings, in part due to protests by the non-Gypsy populace and in part due to the limited availability of housing plots. Most CS homes were built with one room and a kitchen and often became overcrowded while still under construction. Two other recurring problems were the shoddy workmanship of the small tradesmen involved in the construction and the irresponsibility of the councils. This report not only criticised the council apparatus and the non-Gypsy residents for the lack of success of the CS housing program, but also had harsh words for the Gypsy populace:

The evolution of new Gypsy rows has been contributed to by a portion of the families being incapable of changing their lifestyle, made apparent by the dilapidated state of the homes built. The condition of purchased homes is even sadder. Homes bought 4–5 years ago have become life-threatening and uninhabitable. The families living in these homes-turned-slums are still burdened by OTP debts, and their housing situation has again become a problem (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 41/1989.).

The CS housing program came to an end in January 1989. Thus, the housing solution of those remaining in slum-like settlements became hopeless, and the long running temporary solution to eliminate Gypsy settlements had failed to solve the problem (Rozgonyi-Horváth 2018).

The economic decline and the changes in employment policy were a harsh new reality in the everyday lives of Gypsy families, who were among the first affected. Their low level of education and lack of skill training meant the new job market had less and less of a need for them. Many lost their jobs, casting Gypsy families further into despair, made worse by the fact that the single paycheck family model was the most common among them. The growing unemployment among the Gypsy populace affected not only those living in small villages, but also those in industrial centres. Families remained without earnings and turned to the social benefit system in hopes of some income, but they were often disappointed.

More than half of the 3,206 unemployed are Gypsies. Many among them do not meet the requirements of the regulations making them eligible for unemployment benefits (of the 900 individuals receiving unemployment benefits, about 40 % are Gypsies), and so families remain without any subsistence (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 41/1989.).

Public works did provide some reprieve from complete destitution, but the report reflected on the problems associated with this, too, “90 % of those in public works are Gypsies. The employment policy tool can only reduce; it cannot be a long-term solution to the employment of those with a low level of schooling” (MNL BAZML XXIII-1a 41/1989.).

## 5. Conclusion

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The change in historic epochs was far from drastic in terms of measures taken concerning Gypsies, and in terms of approach, there was a kind of continuity on both a national and county level. What has been called Gypsy question remained one of public health and security. The developments in the second half of the 1950s did lead to some degree of change, and in BAZ county, they began to work upon the Gypsies' situation. The Gypsy population of the county lived mainly in Gypsy settlements, there were important advances in the school enrolment of Gypsy children, and the most significant improvements were in the area of employment during this period. A high degree of differentiation happened among the Gypsy populace; while a portion of Gypsy workers integrated into the job market, another much larger portion made their living from traditional Gypsy trades. That is to say that the integration of the Gypsy populace into heavy industry and the school enrolment of Gypsy children did not begin with the 1961 party resolution, but in earlier years.

The single party state laid the groundwork for forced assimilation in the early 1960s and then ordered the higher state authorities and county councils to conduct any measures promulgated along the official ideology. During the attempts to execute directives, the central authorities and those at county level were confronted with the difficulty of the tasks, especially the elimination of the settlements with inadequate social conditions. In the 1960s and 1970s, the various authorities at both the national and county level were faithful to the concepts set forth by the 1960 party resolution. The 1979 party resolution did not reject its predecessor and kept its fundamental theorem; the changes were attempted answers to the new problems that had arisen. The survey of the county's Gypsy populace at the end of the 1970s showed some gradual progress, not unlike the national tendencies. Nonetheless, this progress only affected a part of the Gypsy populace. The county leadership had to confront many new barriers to further progress, one of which was the appearance of segregation in many areas. Ghettos evolved in villages and in cities, and the CS housing projects were built in groupings and thus created a more modern Gypsy settlement. The creation of Gypsy classes in schools and Gypsy brigades at plants and companies were all accepted practice. Segregation appeared throughout BAZ county, despite the central resolutions specifically stating that this was to be avoided. This phenomenon was mainly the fault of local councils, schools and industry, and the county council, who almost without exception composed its directives and measures in accordance with the principles of the state Gypsy policy. Overall, the policy of forced assimilation was consistently followed until it reached the level where those non-Gypsies in positions of authority were personally affected by the measures and the customary patterns of coexistence were threatened.

By the 1980s, it had become apparent that the Gypsy policy of forced assimilation had failed and ending segregation had only been partially achieved. Thus, the central authorities began to gradually replace their former official ideological position concerning this question and allow for more ambition among Gypsies as a nationality; and to a smaller degree this did trickle down to the county level. Overall, it is important to note that in this investigated county during the decades of socialism, they very rarely chose to deal with this issue. It was in the second half of the 1980s that the first signs of regression in the Gypsy populace became evident, such as the decrease in their employment, which peaked after the change in regime. With the conclusion of the CS housing program, and despite its many drawbacks, the prospects of many still living in Gypsy settlements became even more hopeless. Though there was progress in education, the gap between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy population remained.

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