Ethnic and Racial Studies Vol. 26 No. 5 September 2003 pp. 879–901

Ethnic minority identity and movement politics: The case of the Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Peter Vermeersch

Abstract

The level of political mobilization among ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe has often been regarded as directly dependent on the strong or weak ethnic identity of the groups involved. Less attention has gone to the role of ethnic leaders in creating ethnic group identities for political purposes. This article explores the influence of political mobilization on ethnic group formation in the case of the Roma (Gypsies) in the contemporary Czech and Slovak Republics. It examines the various ways in which Romani activists in these two countries have "framed" Romani identity. The article suggests that activists' conceptions of Romani identity are closely tied to their political strategies. At the same time, Romani activists have not been able to gain complete control over the production of Romani identity. They have had to deal with powerful schemes of ethnic categorization promulgated by the media, public officials and policy documents.

Keywords: Collective identity; ethnic politics; ethnic mobilization; framing processes; Roma (Gypsies); Czech and Slovak Republics.

Throughout the last decade, political scientists and popular commentators have increasingly recognized ethnicity as an important element of politics in Central and Eastern Europe. This has produced a large body of literature debating the ethnic interests of political parties, leaders and activists in the region. At the same time, however, relatively few empirical studies have examined how politicians and activists in Central and Eastern Europe have influenced ethnic boundaries. In fact, not many observers of the region have regarded ethnic politics as a factor that contributes to the *production* of ethnic minority groups.

ISSN 0141-9870 print/1466-4356 online
DOI: 10.1080/0141987032000109078

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

It is the aim of this article to examine precisely this factor in the case of the Roma (Gypsies). The Roma are popularly viewed as one of the most immutable and traditional ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe; they seem 'unconstructed' and unaffected by the larger political environment. This article challenges this depiction and aims to show that the institutional and discursive dimensions of politics do have a strong impact on the process of Romani identity formation. To study this process I rely on insights from social movement literature. Social movement scholars have emphasized the utility of analysing group identity as the product of 'group-making projects' (Brubaker 2002, p. 12). Group identities, they have argued, are produced and continuously re-defined by the process of collective action (della Porta and Diani 1999, p. 87). Translated to the area of ethnicity research, this means one should concentrate not on 'ethnic groups' as supposedly 'substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed' (Brubaker 2002, p. 2), but on the role of activists, organizations, political institutions and political discourses in bringing about ethnic groups.

A number of reasons underpin the choice to focus on the Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. First, while in recent years the Roma in these two countries received an unprecedented amount of attention, the descriptions in the media and in international studies have mostly been one-sided. Much attention has gone to the Roma as victims of human rights breaches and economic deterioration, but there has been little reflection on the link between collective action and Romani identity. Yet it seems not unreasonable to assume that activists have played a role in producing public conceptions of Romani identity. Since 1989 the number of ethnically-based interest organizations in the Czech Republic and Slovakia that have engaged in Romani political mobilization has increased dramatically (see e.g. Barany 1998). Moreover, a number of Romani activists have managed to voice their concerns in the international media and have found a positive response from a number of domestic and international politicians.

Secondly, the case of the Romani movement in the Czech and Slovak Republics is interesting because it is characterized by what seems to be a contradiction. On the one hand, activists have been successful in getting the term 'Roma' adopted in mainstream politics. Moreover, they have been able to find access to the domestic policy-making process. On the other hand, however, the Romani movement has manifestly failed to attract large constituencies. Some observers have argued that this shortcoming is related to the exceptional nature of the Roma as an extremely heterogeneous conglomerate of ethnic sub-groups. As one journalist argued: 'They belong to many different, and often antagonistic, clans and tribes, with no common language or religion' (*The Economist* 2000, p. 62). According to Barany (2002, p. 203), 'the absence of a strong ethnic identity has been one of the key reasons for the deficiencies of Romani

mobilization'. The evidence in this article suggests, however, that the ethnic heterogeneity can be understood, not as a cause of failing ethnic mobilization, but as a *consequence* of it. The process of Romani mobilization itself has given rise to competing understandings of Romani identity. Thus, it is my contention that Romani mobilization has been hindered, not by the alleged universally low levels of Romani ethnic awareness, but by crucial factors of political organization such as strategic disputes between movement elites about how to conceptualize Romani identity, how to promote their conceptualizations, and how to organize around them.

The article consists of four parts. The first part briefly describes the historical background of the emergence of Romani political activism in the 1990s in the Czech and Slovak Republics. The second part introduces the concept of 'framing', which in social movement literature refers to the attempts of movement organizers to define and promote a particular understanding of reality (a 'frame') as a basis for collective action. In the third part, the concept of 'framing' is employed to explore Romani activists' descriptions of collective identity. The empirical basis of this part consists of interviews with Czech and Slovak Romani activists about their movement activities, conducted during field research in 2000 and 2001.[1] The fourth part examines the way Romani identity has been framed in recent government reports.

The Romani movement in the Czech lands and Slovakia

Historical background

Although Romani activism in the Czech and Slovak Republics has largely been a post-1989 phenomenon, some of its roots date back to the communist period. In 1969 the Czechoslovakian authorities temporarily abandoned the policy of cultural assimilation and allowed the establishment of a Romani organization, the Association for Roma-Gypsies (*Svaz Cikánů-Romů*/*Sväz Cigánov-Rómov*) (Guy 2001, p. 291). This organization was tasked to promote Romani folklore, music and literature, and to bolster the Roma's participation in the mainstream economy. Although the organization fell under the control of the communists, it should not be discounted as meaningless. For the Romani activists involved it represented one of the first institutional channels through which nationality status could be demanded (although the communist authorities would never comply with this demand). Moreover, it enabled the participation of an official Romani delegation from Czechoslovakia to the first World Romani Congress [WRC], held in London in 1971. This congress was a historical meeting of Romani activists from various European countries and represented one of the first well-documented attempts at organizing an international Romani movement. After the

sudden abolition of both the Slovak and Czech branches of the Association in 1973, the communist authorities in Czechoslovakia did not again allow experimenting with ethnically-based institutions. Nevertheless, the Association had set the aims for future mobilization.

One of the aims had been the distribution of a new name. The term 'Roma' (meaning 'man' or 'husband' in the Romani language) was put forward to encompass a variety of communal-based identities across different countries – such as Servika, Romungro, Vlach, Sinti and so forth – which had in common that they all were subject to external categorization under the exonym 'Gypsies' (Gheorghe 1991). The dissemination of the 'new' ethnic label and the eradication of the 'old' designation was considered especially necessary with regard to the words for 'Gypsy' in the Slavic languages (e.g. 'cikán' in Czech, 'cigán' in Slovak), which are almost invariably used in a derogatory way.[2]

After the changes of 1989, individual Romani activists and emerging Romani political elites across several Central European countries resumed the promotion of a common Romani ethnicity. Puxon (2000, p. 94) has argued that with the end of communism the 'shocking increase in anti-Gypsy violence and racial intolerance, evident throughout Europe, has begun to politicise and unite a new generation to a degree not seen before'. It is no doubt true that deteriorating economic conditions and the increase of anti-Romani behaviour in the Czech and Slovak Republics have stimulated the increase of Romani movement activities. However, important additional elements of the explanation are to be found in the institutional and political circumstances of the post-1989 period, which offered Romani individuals unprecedented opportunities to organize around ethnic claims. First, since they were able to build alliances with former dissident organizations, the Roma gained support from the new political elite. In 1990 a number of Romani activists in Czechoslovakia publicly identified themselves as a separate group of participants to the anti-communist movement, and joined the coalition parties that won the first democratic elections (Civic Forum and Public against Violence). Secondly, the new political environment functioned as a breeding ground for ethnopolitical mobilization in general, and thus not surprisingly also for Romani mobilization. As Wolchik (1995, p. 240) has argued, political leaders in Czechoslovakia were able to channel the dissatisfaction and uncertainty that accompany large-scale economic and political changes into support for ethnic claims.

This was still the case after the break-up of Czechoslovakia. In Slovakia, the issue of the rights of the ethnic Hungarian minority began to dominate party competition (Evans and Whitefield 1998). Throughout the 1990s, the popular party Movement for a Democratic Slovakia [HZDS] of the former premier, Vladimír Mečiar, mobilized around the issue of Slovak national identity in opposition to Hungarian identity. Although the language of the HZDS was not as harsh as the xenophobic

rhetoric of the far-right Slovak National Party [SNS], which was twice a coalition partner in a government led by the HZDS, the party was certainly not averse to tapping into anti-Hungarian sentiments (Haughton 2001, p. 752). The nationalist discourse and Mečiar's authoritarian style of government between 1994 and 1998 aroused fierce criticism from human rights organizations at home and abroad.

In the Czech Republic, the ethnic dimension to domestic political competition was less prominent. After the break-up the country was more than ever perceived as ethnically homogeneous. However, ethnic mobilization surfaced also there both in the margins and at the centre of domestic politics. The electoral results of the radical-right Republican Party [SPR-RSC] were poor throughout the 1990s, but this did not prevent mainstream politicians parties from playing out hostile sentiments towards the Roma from time to time. Precarious statements were made by members of the Civic Democratic Party [ODS] of the former prime minister, Václav Klaus. For example, some decried the choice of an increasing number of Roma to seek asylum in other countries; others denounced the international indignation about the situation in Ústi nad Labem, where the local government in 1999 attempted to fence off a block of flats inhabited mostly by Romani families (Fawn 2001, p. 1203). In both countries ethnic Romani claims received support from international and domestic advocacy organizations. Moreover, political concern for the countries' international reputation in recent years frequently moved the Romani issue to the centre of the political debate. As European Union candidate countries the Czech Republic and Slovakia tried to enhance their international standing by emphasizing that they attached particular importance to the principles of minority rights protection.

Failing mass mobilization

Despite the organizational growth and the increase of international attention, the Czech and Slovak Romani movements continued to struggle with obstacles hindering mass mobilization. This was most obvious in electoral politics. The only Romani party that ever ran on its own in Czech nationwide elections was the Romani Civic Initiative [ROI] in the elections for the 1992 Federal Assembly and Czech National Council, in the 1996 Senate elections, and in the 2002 elections for the Chamber of deputies; in all cases it attained results far below 0.1 per cent. During the 1990 elections a coalition of the Democratic Union of Roma and the Party for the Integration of Roma in Slovakia [DÚRS] filed candidates for the Federal Assembly and the Slovak National Council, but its electoral support reached no more than 0.73 per cent. The Romani parties ROI-SR and the Party for Labour and Security [SPI] stood separately in the 1992 Slovak elections, but reached no more than 0.6 per cent and 0.97 per cent of the

vote – far below the 5 per cent threshold. In the 1994 elections, ROI-SR enjoyed support from one of Slovakia's most popular parties, the HZDS, but again it attracted a low number of voters (0.67 per cent) (for election results see Popescu and Hannavy 2002). Various Romani activists also tried to achieve political representation through their involvement in mainstream political parties; but these activists, too, failed to persuade voters. After the elections of 1992, when the anti-communist alliance had splintered, Romani political representation on national level almost disappeared. Romani elites received more attention from the mainstream media with the passage of time, but the gap between them and their constituencies in many cases proved to be unbridgeable.

Furthermore, the Czech and Slovak Romani elites grappled with the reluctance of their target audiences to identify themselves as Roma in official registrations. The official 1991 census figure for the Romani population was 80,627 (1.5 per cent) in Slovakia and 32,903 (0.3 per cent) in the Czech part of the country – this being the result of the first census in which the Roma obtained the right to proclaim themselves as a distinct national minority (Český statistický úřad 2002; Štatistický úrad Slovenskej republiky 2002). However, both the Czech and Slovak government have admitted that the actual rate of people who identify themselves as Roma in daily life must be substantially higher (Vláda České republiky 1999a; Slovak Government 1999). Independent researchers and Romani organizations have claimed that the Roma constitute around 7 to 8 per cent (up to 500,000) of the Slovak citizens and around 3 per cent (up to 250,000) of the Czech citizens (Druker 1997, pp. 22–23). These authors have not made clear how their estimations were carried out, but their numbers are often cited, have been accepted by the international community, and therefore have gained the status of the 'truth'. The results of the 2001 censuses, however, were again far below the estimated figures. In the Czech Republic the number decreased to 11,716 (barely 0.1 per cent of the total population), while in Slovakia there was only a slight growth to 89,920 (1.7 per cent of the population). These figures came as a disappointment to many Romani activists, who had promoted Romani identification and had even demanded the government to make census forms available in the Romani language.

Low official rates of Romani identification do not necessarily indicate, as some authors have suggested, a 'low level of ethnic awareness' among Roma (Plichtová 1993, p. 17). Other authors, for example, have explained the matter by referring to bureaucratic irregularities during the official registration (Druker 1998) or by referring to people who identify themselves as Roma in daily life, but refuse to do so in an official form for fear of some kind of reprisal (Clark 1998). Although it is difficult to establish the definitive influence of such factors, the discussion at least points to a potential problem surrounding the perception of the public 'image' of Romani identity.

In what follows I will consider the responses of Romani activists. I will discuss (a) their attempts at formulating convincing conceptions ('frames') of Romani identity, and (b) the difficulties that they have encountered when attempting to promote particular identity frames. A comparison of the two countries, then, will allow one to explore factors of the political context that influenced identity disputes within the Czech and Slovak Romani movement.

Framing ethnic group identity

Before embarking upon all of this, however, a few words of explanation may be in order with regard to the concept of 'framing'. In various types of research the term 'frame' has been used to denote, in its most general sense, a schema of interpretation. 'Framing', then, refers to the activity of reproducing meaning. Most studies in social science that use the concept of framing offer a definition derived from the writings of Erving Goffman, in particular his book *Frame Analysis* (Goffman 1975). Goffman used the designation 'primary framework' to refer to what he called a 'conceptual structure' that organizes interpretation, or a 'mental set' through which people understand and construct social events. Goffman's concept provided an important source of inspiration for scholars who studied social movements (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). These scholars shifted the focus away from frames as pure cognition and concentrated on the power of deliberate framing by activists. According to these authors, frames do not only perform an interpretative function, as suggested by Goffman. Certain patterns of interpretation are promoted with a specific intention 'to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists' (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 612).

Social movement scholars have been interested in framing when understood as the way in which movement actors disseminate their understanding of social reality in order to appeal to a constituency. Different authors have often highlighted different aspects of the framing process. Some authors have centred attention on the individual control over framing processes. In their view, research has to focus on the ability of activists to assign meaning to social reality, promote a certain understanding of reality and intentionally choose a frame for mobilization. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996, p. 6) define framing as 'the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion a shared understanding of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action'. Others have emphasized that the process of framing is not taking place in a vacuum (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 628). For them, research should not discard the fact that framing is always negotiated and to a certain degree shaped by the complex, multi-organizational, multi-institutional arenas in which it takes place. These authors have

emphasized that frame diffusion (how do frames spread?) and frame resonance (how do frames become effective?) is affected by the cultural and political environment.

The concept of framing provides a useful contribution to the study of ethnic minority mobilization since it directs attention to cognition and persuasion. According to the framing approach, the boundaries of ethnic minority identity are continuously reconstituted in the light of the present circumstances, even in cases where there are seemingly 'objective' historical and cultural foundations of this identity. Thus, an ethnic minority is not simply a group of people that differs from the rest of society in terms of language, tradition and so forth, but rather the result of a process in which such differences are deemed socially and politically meaningful and are acted upon. By employing Benford and Snow's concept of framing to the subject area of ethnic mobilization, an opportunity is created to examine the element of choice in the construction of ethnic identity (the use of intentional frames) as well as the element of designation (the presence of countermobilizing frames or the (in)ability of a particular frame to resonate in a given context).

Romani identity and frame alignment in Romani activist discourse

Since 1989 a growing body of descriptions of the way in which the Roma are treated in the new democracies of Central Europe have become available to the regional specialist. These descriptions contain various assumptions about what constitutes Romani identity. Often the Roma in Central Europe have been conceptualized as a mixture between an 'immigrant minority' and a 'national minority', but neither of the two types exactly, because it was observed that only a limited number of them had migrated in recent times and that they did not have a connection to an external homeland (Kymlicka 2000, p. 204). Others have pointed to certain customs and traditions that – even if they are not observed – constitute in their view the basis of 'orthodox' Romani identity (Barany 2002, p. 13). In the majority of the descriptions the alleged Indian origin has served as a main source for identifying them.

Exploration of the interviews and texts produced by Romani activists in the Czech Republic and Slovakia led to the observation that in both countries mainly three types of Romani identity frames have been used to describe and promote Romani collective action.

A non-territorial nation

The first frame defines the Roma as a 'non-territorial nation'. The Romani activists who subscribed to this perspective in order to talk about their collective identity emphasized the view that all Roma in Europe possess a common history and, especially, a common origin. The

apparent fragmentation has in their view been caused by time periods of aggressive assimilation and repressive policies implemented by non-Romani authorities. They argued that all Romani communities are deeply connected, not through territory, but through blood ties, common history, and culture; and that therefore they should be granted a special legal position in Europe – although they usually had only vague ideas about what kind of legal protection this special status would need. To some extent this frame reflects the experience of what Soysal (1996) has called 'postnational citizenship', a practice of citizenship that is increasingly defined according to entitlements emerging from the transnational discourse and the practice of international human rights protection. Arguably, the growing attention of human rights organizations to the position of the Roma in both countries stimulated the popularity of this perspective.

The frame has been vigorously promoted by organizations that claim to represent a cross-border Romani constituency, such as the German-based Roma National Congress. Since its foundation in 1977 it has also been the perspective promoted by the International Romani Union [IRU], a non-governmental organization that has attempted to become the predominant forum for international Romani activism. Until recently, the attempts of the IRU to gain a dominant position in the Romani movement and attract a larger constituency were rather unsuccessful. Moreover, in the 1990s the organization was plagued by internal dissidence and leadership struggles (Acton and Klímová 2001, p. 162). In 2000, however, activists were able to revive the IRU through a new World Romani Congress [WRC] held in Prague. The initiative had been encouraged by calls from international organizations (in particular, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE]) for a unified international Romani actor as negotiating partner. There had also been a need for a legitimate international Romani agency to put forward a restitution claim for pre-war financial deposits of Roma that were made available by Swiss banks.

Clearly, the election of the former leader of the Czech part of the Romani political party ROI, Slovak-born Emil Ščuka, to the presidency of the IRU at the fifth WRC in Prague, played a significant role in the promotion of this frame in both the Czech and Slovak Republics. During the latest WRC a declaration was adopted that conceptualized the Roma as a 'nation' on the basis of their common culture, language and origin. The IRU claimed not to be just an international Romani organization, but *the* representative organization for 'all the Roma in the world' (article 1 of the IRU Charter; Acton and Klimová 2001, p. 201). The language of the latest WCR was clearly that of 'national liberation', although dissimilar to many other national liberation movements since it explicitly excluded *territorial* liberation as a goal. Defining the Roma as a non-territorial and 'transnational' ethnic group has clearly been an

effective strategy. In the latter half of the 1990s the OSCE and the Council of Europe established special institutions to raise the level of awareness concerning the problems facing the Roma within the respective member states (respectively, the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies). Thanks to good contacts of the IRU's Commissar for Foreign Policy (Paolo Pietrosanti) with the Transnational Radical Party and the Lista Emma Bonino in the European Parliament, the IRU was able to establish an office at the European Parliament buildings in Brussels.

Ščuka's ideas have been widely distributed among Czech and Slovak Romani activists; all activists surveyed were aware of the existence of the IRU. Especially activists who had been present at the fifth WRC – such as, for example, Ivan Veselý and Gejza Adam – recognized the symbolic importance of representing the Roma in a Europe-wide forum. Other Romani activists who advocated this frame usually maintained connections with the IRU or the Roma National Congress, although their connection and knowledge of the organizational development of Romani activism in countries outside the Czech and Slovak Republics was usually quite limited. For all these activists the 'nation' frame represented a useful tool for activism towards international organizations. Indirectly this strategy contributed to higher levels of external pressure and scrutiny on both the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

However effective the idea of the Roma as a non-territorial nation has been on the international level, it has had limited concrete implications for domestic Romani mobilization in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Some concrete influence of the fifth WRC could be detected in Slovakia during attempts of Romani political parties in October 2000 to unite in an electoral platform. Emil Ščuka, as the IRU president, was present at the meeting in Košice where thirteen Romani political parties and twenty-five non-political Romani organizations decided to join together in a unified Romani electoral platform for the parliamentary elections of 2002. However, the role of the IRU in this case should not be overestimated; the plan had been initiated by ROI, a Romani political party with no international goals, and was unambiguously formulated as an attempt to stimulate Romani political mobilization, not on the European level, but in the Slovak political arena.

Many local activists in both the Slovak and Czech Republic questioned the connection between the international level and the local needs of Romani communities. According to one Slovak activist,

> There is a growing division between the needs of the Romani population and the activism of the Roma. Today, it is even more difficult than in the past to attract Romani voters. The main reasons are poverty and the fact that people are disillusioned by politics. They don't regard activists as their representatives. When I go to Eastern Slovakia, the

> Romani people there don't see me as their representative, but as an important person from Bratislava (Personal interview).

The 'non-territorial nation' frame was criticized for other reasons as well. One criticism was that 'Indian origin' and 'transborder cooperation' are very academic notions, and thus poor tools for bolstering domestic mobilization. As one Czech Romani activist stated,

> We are a national minority (…). The fact that the Roma are a worldwide and a European nation is only important to stress towards other countries where the Roma are not yet acknowledged as a national minority (Personal interview).

Another contention relates to the symbolic consequences of considering the Roma a separate nation. Some have wondered what it would mean to be treated as a nation *within* another nation. As one activist asked, 'Would this mean that, in the Czech Republic, for example, the Roma are no longer Czechs?' (PER 2001, p. 37). One Czech respondent even claimed that 'ordinary' Roma are not interested in being regarded as a nation: they do not want Romani schools, they want to be regarded as Czechs with Havel as *their* President, too (Personal interview).

Several Romani activists were also suspicious of the Slovak and Czech governments' strong verbal support for the WRC and the IRU Charter, even though the IRU actively sought the support of those governments. Many agreed with the opinion that the whole process of promoting the Roma as a nation was primarily in the interest of individual states, since it shifted the focus of attention away from the responsibility of domestic governments. Thus a number of Czech and Slovak Romani activists perceived the strategy of the IRU as potentially undermining the position of the Roma as a national minority in the domestic context.

The discourse of national minority rights

The second way in which Romani identity was presented by activists was through a 'national minority' frame. Although as in the previous frame activists centred attention on the difference between the Roma and the ethnic majority, they did not demand a special 'European' status for the Roma. They maintained that the Czech and Slovak Republics were to be regarded as the 'homelands' of the Czech and Slovak Roma. They also believed that when the Roma would be conceptualized as a national minority, they would more easily find support from other national minorities and non-Romani supporters of minority rights. This was an important element especially for the Roma in Slovakia. More than once the political success of the Hungarian minority was referred to as an example.[3] The frame was also reflected in attempts by Slovak Romani

activists to form ethnically-based political parties. As mentioned, the attempts of ROI in October 2000 to unite Slovak Romani political parties in an electoral platform can clearly be read as an effort to strengthen the position of the Roma as a national minority and bring it to the level of that of the Hungarian minority.

Other Slovak Romani activists found this frame of Romani identity problematic, and this for a number of reasons. First, the experience of the Roma has often been very different from that of other national minorities. For example, the Roma have never voiced demands for political autonomy or territorial self-determination. Secondly, parties and interest groups from other national minorities have often distanced themselves from the Romani perspective. Slovak Romani activists have estimated that just a small portion of the Hungarians in Slovakia identifies itself with the plight of the Romani minority. In the Czech Republic there has even been less opportunity to ally with other national minorities. The Roma have not felt any affiliation with the demands for self-government rights sometimes voiced by Moravian and Silesian civic organizations and political parties.

There is also a third reason. Some Romani activists have been hesitant about bringing Roma under the discourse of national minority rights, because they fear that national minority rights do not primarily reflect Romani interests, but rather the interests of the authorities. According to their argument the issue of national minority rights plays a fundamental role in the negotiation of the relationship between the European Union states and the candidate countries, and is therefore not driven by a real concern for the position of the Roma. Although this criticism was only implicitly present in the accounts of some of the Romani activists interviewed, it is one that has been most clearly expressed in the international Romani movement. In 1997 Nicolae Gheorghe, a Romanian Romani activist and currently the head of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR], formulated the matter as follows:

> I personally am critical towards this trend in the Romani movement which seeks to fashion Romanies as a national minority because I consider that in reality, the true concept of national minority is only a by-product of nation-state building (…). Ethnic minority policies are exhibited as if in a display cabinet, like a showcase in international politics to make sure that the Council of Europe and the Western democracies think that things are good in eastern Europe. (Gheorghe 1997, p. 160)

The Roma as an ethnoclass

The third frame conceptualizes the Roma as what could be called an 'ethnoclass'. Gurr and Harff (1994, p. 23) have defined an ethnoclass as

an ethnic group which resembles a class. According to Gurr and Harff members of ethnoclasses are disproportionately concentrated in occupations at or near the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. Romani identity in this frame is characterized by a low social position. Romani activists who use this frame emphasized the detrimental social circumstances of Romani life: the need for education, better housing and employment. The protection of cultural aspects of Romani identity was seen as less important; these matters were mostly regarded as strictly private. In general, activists advocated a certain degree of ethnic anonymity. The view has been expressed quite clearly by a Slovak Romani activist who in the beginning of the 1990s was involved in the establishment of a Romani party called Party for Labour and Security [SPI].

> We disagreed with ROI because we saw that they didn't make any progress in integrating the Roma. (…) We wanted a party which would not represent only the Roma living in the East of the country [where the main support for ROI is located]. We wanted to focus on social issues in general, and most importantly, on unemployment (Personal interview).

Another Romani activist has formulated a similar perspective as follows:

> For at least two decades now, the IRU agenda has been packed with such ideas as developing a 'Roma codex', codifying the language, and 'renewing' old traditions and values – ideas the Romani masses really didn't care all that much about. The Romani leadership bears a responsibility to address the central problem of providing Roma with security. How the Roma will live their lives is a secondary concern. This is a matter of individual choice. (PER 2001, p. 38)

This frame has had a certain appeal to people who experienced that receiving attention as a national minority does not necessarily diminish popular stereotypes. Romani activists who emphasized ethnoclass identity sought to avoid presenting themselves as too closely associated with Romani identity. They considered it not beneficial to stress a form of identity that is generally perceived as pathological. Instead, they tried to mobilize on the basis of their social situation as poor or disadvantaged citizens. Many Roma who advocated this frame had positive memories about the communist period. For them post-communism has only meant a substantive decline in living standards and exclusion from economic opportunity.

The problem, however, is that this framing has not visibly created links of solidarity between Roma and the poor non-Romani population. Those Roma who favoured diminishing the importance attached to ethnic

differences, and chose instead to demand economic support for poor communities in general, hoped to find more successful lobby groups outside the Romani movement. Moreover, none of the attempts by Romani activists to capitalize upon feelings of nostalgia for the communist period have proved successful. Some Romani activists were reminded of the less attractive sides of the communist approach. They referred to the fact that overall approach of the communist authorities in Czechoslovakia had been ambiguous on the status of 'Gypsy' identity. For example, the designation 'Gypsy' was officially approached as a social group identification, a remnant of a previous social order, and was simply meant to disappear by a transformation of the social and economic status of the group. This inspired a harsh assimilation campaign at the end of the 1950s and a targeted 'dispersal and transfer' scheme from 1965 to 1968 (Guy 2001, p. 291).

Romani identity and policy formulations

Frames of Romani identity are shaped not only by the internal circumstances of the Romani community or by strategic considerations, but also by external circumstances such as institutional context and cultural meanings and, most importantly, by formulations of public policy. In order to gain insight into the latter aspect, I will now briefly consider the conceptions of Romani identity that can be discerned in recent Czech and Slovak government reports and resolutions.

Czech Republic

Two elements of Romani identity framing in Czech government reports and in the more general Czech political discourse have attracted attention. The first element concerns the allusions made to objectionable identity characteristics; the second relates to the increasing tendency of Czech governmental actors to support the idea of the Roma as a European nation. The sources that I refer to here are in the first place documents that have been produced with the participation of the Interdepartmental Commission for Romani Community Affairs (later, the Government Council for Romani Community Affairs) under the government led by Miloš Zeman. In 1999 the Interdepartmental Commission finished a document presenting the policy concept of 'Romani integration'. In April 2000 this concept was adopted by the government as the principal component of a new strategic 'Romani policy' (Resolutions 279/1999 and 599/2000).

The first point to be noted is that the resolutions shaped by the Interdepartmental Commission do not contain any explicit definitions of Romani identity. These texts depart from the assumption that Roma should be regarded as a national minority. This assumption, then, is

regarded as a sufficient motivation to devote attention to the group. However, the texts make clear that there are some crucial differences between the Roma and other national minorities. These differences are presented as motivations for the construction of a *special* policy for this group. In essence, then, the differences described express an implicit top-down conception of Romani identity. The resolutions 279/1999 and 599/2000, together with their explanatory reports, contain indications of a conception that links Romani identity with condemnable social behaviour. This does not necessarily mean that Czech policy-makers have deliberately wanted to stimulate negative views on Romani identity. What it does show, however, is that negative aspects of Romani identity (as implicitly defined in the resolutions) are seen as a core element of the policy problem that these resolutions want to address. This implicit connection is visible, for example, in the passages that describe the need for better motivations to work and the active prevention of illegal behaviour. For instance, the Czech authorities have defined Romani integration in the following way:

> Integration, then, is understood to mean the Romani community's full-scale incorporation into society while preserving most of the cultural specificities and different features which characterize this community and which it wishes to adhere to *so long as these distinctive features are not at variance with the laws of the Czech Republic*. (Vláda České republiky 1999b, emphasis added)

By referring to illegal behaviour as a distinctive feature, this definition suggests that some features of Roma identity *are* indeed at variance with the laws of the Czech Republic. With the exception of some brief considerations on Romani language, the documents do not provide any further descriptions of Romani traditions or 'cultural specificities'.

The problematic character of certain alleged traits of Romani identity are also suggested by the dubious position in the texts on whether the development of Romani culture is a desirable strategy. The government document on Romani policy, on the one hand, states that the emancipation of Romani identity is the ultimate goal. In a translation of the draft resolution distributed by the Czech government it is stated that 'the more Romas [sic] will feel being Roma, the more emancipated and responsible citizens they will be' (Vláda České republiky 1999b). But at the same time, the first three pages of that same draft already contain four statements to qualify this. These statements indicate that assimilation (quite the opposite of what is proposed in the above quote) is not necessarily a bad strategy either, at least for individuals. The resolution further argues that assimilation is generally what 'the majority of the Czech citizens' expect of the Roma, and that the government should certainly not discourage the phenomenon.

> [The government] is aware that the majority of the Czech citizens is able and willing to accept Romanies only when they adapt to the majority and assimilate into it.
> (…)
> The government will not refuse support to those Romanies who voluntarily wish to assimilate. (Vláda České republiky 1999b)

In one of the drafts the statement that emancipation is a prerequisite for integration is preceded by a qualification arguing that 'it cannot be denied that assimilation can also lead to meaningful citizenship'.

With regard to the 'Europeanization' of Romani identity, one can refer to the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs' activities and statements that have been related to the Roma. In December 1998 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported a conference organized by the Czech Institute for International Relations under the title, 'The Roma community and multi-ethnicity in the countries of Central Europe – A European problem?' The contribution of the then Czech deputy minister of foreign affairs, Martin Palouš, indicated clearly that the purpose of the conference was to place the Czech 'Romani problem' in a European context.

> As the title of the conference reveals, it is an all-European problem (…) We must always bear in mind that the successful solution of our domestic difficulties as regards the integration of the Romany ethnic group will to a large extent be inseparable from these broader links. (Palouš 1998a, pp. 11–12)

Palouš also mentioned the reason why he believes we should examine the 'Romani problem' in a European context: the European character of Romani *identity*. Because of their European identity, the Roma should, according to Palouš, expect more help from Europe than other European nations, which have their own state. In the following passage a boundary is constructed between 'the Czechs' as a 'European nation with a state of their own' and 'the Roma' as 'the most European nation' *without* a state and for whom the transnational level (European institutions) should bear more responsibility than the Czech Republic.

> If the Roma are the most European nation, then the reason could well be that they hold up a kind of specific mirror to Europe in which Europe can see itself, and where they can expect from European institutions a little bit more than other European nations which have their own European states and enter the process of European integration precisely in the light of their experience. (Palouš 1998b, p. 16)

The ministry has supported the Europeanization of Romani identity in more than words alone. Symbolic and financial support was offered by

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the fifth World Romani Congress, and a 'Memorandum of Understanding and Co-operation' was signed by both the Ministry and the IRU. Furthermore, in 2000, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared a document entitled 'the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' conception of the Roma issue', meant inter alia to clarify the official Czech response to international criticism about the situation of the Roma. In this document the 'Europeanization' of the Romani problem was literally referred to as the preferential way of framing the issue. Point 65 of the document defined a number of goals towards which Czech foreign policy should be oriented. The first goal was:

> Promotion of the concept of the Europeanization of the Romani problematic on all levels of Czech foreign policy. We understand Europeanization here, as to grasp the Romani issue as an affair which concerns every European state where a Romani minority lives today. From this follows also the will to seek a solution for the Romani issue at the international/European level, and this includes a financial safeguard for such a solution. (A copy of a part of this document is published in Sobotka 2001, p. 68).

Furthermore, the document suggested that the Czech Republic needs to reject more consistently the criticism from abroad that anti-Romani racism in the Czech Republic is a ubiquitous phenomenon.

Slovak Republic

In 1996, before the refugee crisis of 1997 and 1998, the Slovak coalition government under Vladimír Mečiar adopted a resolution pertaining to the situation of the Roma. Slovakia introduced new policy initiatives on this subject before the Czech Republic did, plausibly as a result of the attitude of Mečiar's right-wing populist party HZDS (Movement for a Democratic Slovakia) towards the Roma. Unlike in the Czech Republic the Roma in Slovakia form a substantial part of the electorate. By emphasizing preference for a strong social policy the HZDS has more than once tried to attract Romani voters. Not surprisingly, the 1996 resolution on Roma entitled 'Activities and Measures in Order to Solve the Problems of Citizens in Need of Special Care' (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 1996) was very much in keeping with a 'socio-economic view' on Roma: it treated the name 'Roma' and the phrase 'citizens in need of special care' as synonymous concepts.

The responses to this government resolution were varied. On the one hand, it was welcomed by a part of the Romani activists since it made funds available for initiatives in the fields of education, employment, housing and health. At the same time, much to the frustration of Romani activists it did not refer to discrimination as one of the problems to be

addressed. On the contrary, it explicitly linked Romani ethnic or cultural identity and social inferiority by attributing the roots of the 'Romani problem' to their 'socially retarding environments' (paragraph E) or their 'negative social behaviour' (paragraph F). Romani activists also perceived the whole government's approach as paternalistic, because it did not acknowledge the responsibility of the majority and neither did it plan to address the under-representation of the Roma in the policy-making process. For these reasons it was also heavily criticized by international human rights organizations.

The government of Mikuláš Dzurinda, which came to power in 1998, prioritized the 'Romani issue'. The newly appointed deputy prime minister for human rights, minorities and regional development, the Hungarian Pál Csáky, established the position of Government Commissioner for the Solution of the Problems of the Romani Minority, a position filled first by Vincent Danihel and later by Klara Orgovánová, both Romani activists. The government commissioner's office, responsible for bringing Romani concerns to the governmental level, completed a policy paper in June 1999 entitled 'Strategy of the Government for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma', which was later adopted by the government (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 1999).

The view on Romani identity produced by the 1999 resolution is ambiguous. On the one hand, the accompanying explanatory report is careful not to generalize, and consistently qualifies the 'Romani problem' as the problem of *a part* of the Romani population. Nevertheless, the document vaguely suggests that Romani culture and lifestyle are indeed problematic by stating that, 'Some aspects of life of a certain part of this minority *cause* social distance in the majority society' or that problems are '*caused* by the specific way of life of a part of the Romani national minority' (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 1999, emphasis added).

The suggestion of a natural overlap between 'Romani identity' and the 'Romani problem' has also been reflected in the political debate surrounding the new government resolutions. Especially when one considers statements made by politicians in power, one sees that the dominant political discourse still suggests that 'Romani identity' and 'Romani culture' are deemed an integral part of the 'Romani problem'. Consider, for example, Csáky's description of the reason why the government has not yet been able to tackle the problematic situation of the Roma:

> The Roma problem arises from the absence of a model for mutual coexistence between completely different cultures. If you had an unimaginable amount of money, could you change India into a modern European country in four years? No. Roma mentality, culture, thinking, reactions do not stem from the classic Slovak culture. We have to look for mutual coexistence, and we need time to make

> changes inside ourselves – both Roma and non-Roma citizens. (Reynolds and Habšudová 2001)

Another characteristic of the resolutions and the surrounding political discourse is that the 'Romani problem' is considered to be a 'European problem'. One easily sees the strategic interest that the authorities have in describing the 'Romani problem' as a problem that exists, not only in Slovakia, but also in other countries where Roma live. In this way Slovakia attempts to get rid of its anti-Romani image. The Europeanization of the Romani problem is a strategy that is readily usable, since it implicitly relies on the argument promoted by some Romani activists themselves that the Roma are a European nation. Consider again the 1999 resolution.

> [T]he Roma are considered a pan-European specific non-territorial ethnic minority whose different way of life traditionally (historically) wakes intolerance among [the] majority population. (Vláda Slovenskej republiky 1999)

As a whole the document presents itself not as a document addressing the difficulties of disadvantaged groups in society in general, or as a document about the protection of ethnic minorities in general; it is a document that *specifically* targets the Roma, conceptualizing them as a European ethnic group *and* as a socially problematic layer of society.

Top-down formulations of Romani identity: implications

The above descriptions are not a full-scale investigation of governmental discourse on Romani identity. Nevertheless, they indicate two basic trends: (a) There is a tendency in both countries to recognize the Roma as a European minority, (b) the meaning of Romani ethnic identity in policy reports carries the strong suggestion that problematic social behaviour and deplorable material circumstances are crucial defining elements of that identity. The implication of this top-down construction of Romani identity for the Romani movement is that it creates a *double bind* situation for activists desiring to engage in ethnic mobilization.

On the one hand, the tendency of both governments to recognize the specific character of the problems that face the Roma represents a positive response to the demands of the Romani movement. In both the Czech and Slovak case the recent resolutions have been drafted through a process that involved the consultation of selected Romani 'representatives'. Arguably, with the assistance of external pressure Romani activists have been able to gain some control over the production of documents on Romani policy. As a result, the conception of the Roma as 'one ethnic group' has been supported by the state. To give just one example, all

Romani policy documents apply to both Vlach and Romungro communities (both groups have become subject to one Romani policy). Although government reports have mentioned that ethnic divisions among the Roma exist, policy-makers have not based differentiated policies on these divisions.

On the other hand, the top-down conception of Romani identity is to a large extent based on observations of social behaviour. This has confronted Romani activists with new difficulties. The identification between social behaviour and ethnic identity can easily be maximized in public discourse and can lead to support a 'discourse of otherness'. For example, when speaking about Romani policy, certain politicians in power have attributed problems of social disadvantage to a reified notion of the 'Romani way of life'.

Unsurprisingly, it has become difficult for Romani activists to promote alternative understandings of themselves and to capture their predicament in an alternative way. The Czech and Slovak governments' ways of framing Romani culture as 'substantially different' neatly fits images of them in mass media and public opinion. Thus, when Roma want to mobilize protest 'in the name of their ethnicity', they are confronted with narratives that question a positive framing of this very same ethnicity. The more they emphasize their ethnic identity, the more they appear to be held responsible for what is typically called the 'Romani problem'. The double bind that Roma are confronted with may have strong implications for the resonance of new frames of Romani identity proffered by the Romani elite. Because of highly salient counterframes, some Roma have already become ambivalent towards the postulated 'Romani identities'. People who express a Romani ethnic identity in the private sphere, may be reluctant to emphasize that ethnicity in public, because they fear that precisely this identification will allow others to discredit them even more. Dominant rhetoric associating Romani identity with social marginality can lead them to reject Romani political mobilization altogether.

Conclusion

I have argued that political mobilization is a crucial aspect of the ethnicity of a minority group since it deeply affects the public self-definition of such a group. In this view it is likely that ethnic identity will be the result of the institutional environment shaping mobilization and the internal strategic choices of aspiring minority leaders which underpin this mobilization.

This is the case for the construction of Romani ethnic identity in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. There are three ways in which activists have framed Romani identity. These frames vary according to the degree in which they emphasize ethnic differentiation or assimilation, and they

represent competing strategic positions. Furthermore, they are to some extent dependent on the dominant ways in which Romani identity has been understood in society at large and the ways in which the 'Romani problem' has been constructed in political discourse.

Comparison between the Slovak and the Czech Republic indicates that contextual aspects of Romani identity play an important role in the creation of Romani mobilization. Even when, as is the case in both countries, international attention has stimulated a process of ethnic mobilization, there is no guarantee that a unified movement will gain ground domestically. In a similar vein, even when, as in the case of Slovakia, ethnic claims are an important element in mainstream political competition and when activists believe they have a large potential constituency, it may still not be easy to mobilize a group around an ethnic minority identity. The complex discursive struggles surrounding the 'Romani problem' seem mostly to have rendered a powerful negative valuation of the concept of Romani identity. Policy documents that were meant as responses to the demands of Romani activists have offered a further basis for such negative understandings. As a result, many Romani activists are today confronted with a crucial question: How to build a movement on what is regarded by many as a 'stigmatized' identity? By paying attention to this double bind situation, this article shows that the difficulties of Romani mobilization should not necessarily be regarded as problems that are related to the nature of the Roma as a heterogeneous collection of immutable ethnic sub-groups. Rather they have to do with the obstacles that activists encounter when they attempt to turn Romani identity, with all its stigmas, into a mobilizing identity.

Acknowledgements

Research for this article has been funded by the National Fund for Scientific Research [FWO], Flanders (Belgium). I thank Colin Clark, Will Guy, Fried Swenden, Ilona Klímová, Bart Maddens and Jan Beyers for their useful comments on earlier drafts.

Notes

1. Representatives of the following organizations were interviewed about their movement activities (in alphabetical order): Athinganoi; The Civic Organisation for the Emancipation and Integration of the Roma; The Democratic Movement of Roma in Slovakia (DHR); Dženo; Inforoma; The International Romani Union; The Party for the Protection of Roma in Slovakia (SOPR); The Party of Romani Democrats in the Slovak Republic (SRD); The Romani Civic Inititiative Czech Republic (ROI); The Romani Civic Initiative Slovakia (ROI-SR); The Romani Intelligentsia for Co-existence (RISZ); The Romani Parliament for Human Rights and Romani migration; The Slovak Romani Initiative (RIS); The Society of Roma in Moravia.
2. Czech and Slovak nouns that refer to ethnic and national groups are normally capitalized; nevertheless, there is a tendency not to do this with the words 'cigán'/'cikán'.

This reflects the popular usage of the word as an insult or a term with negative connotations.

3. One Slovak Romani activists mentioned claims for cultural rights similar to those of the Hungarian minority: 'Not far from Dunajská Streda there is a kindergarten only for Romani children. Some Romani parents there were angry about this, because according to them putting the Roma in separate education is a form of discrimination. They are ashamed of being Roma. I say: the Hungarian minority has its own schools where they teach their children Hungarian, so why should we be ashamed of creating a Romani school?' (Personal interview). Such statements have not been consonant with the concerns of other activists and international NGOs, which have strongly advocated the integration of Romani pupils in mainstream education.

References

ACTON, THOMAS and KLÍMOVÁ, ILONA 2001 'The International Romani Union: an East European answer to West European questions?', in Will Guy (ed.), *Between Past and Future. The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press

BARANY, ZOLTAN 1998 'Ethnic mobilization and the state: the Roma in Eastern Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 308–27

—— 2002 *The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

BENFORD, ROBERT D. and SNOW, DAVID A. 2000 'Framing processes and social movements: an overview and assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 26, pp. 611–39

BRUBAKER, ROGERS 2002 'Ethnicity without groups', <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/brubaker/index.htm> [March 2002]

CLARK, COLIN 1998 'Counting backwards: the Roma "numbers game" in Central and Eastern Europe', *Radical Statistics*, vol. 69, pp. 35–46

ČESKÝ STATISTICKÝ ÚŘAD, *Sčítání lidu, domů a bytů* , <http://www.czso.cz> [March 2002]

DELLA PORTA, DONATELLA and DIANI, MARIO 1999 *Social Movements: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

DRUKER, JEREMY 1997 'Present but unaccounted for', *Transitions*, vol. 4, no. 4, pp. 22–23

EVANS, GEOFFREY and WHITEFIELD, STEPHEN 1998 'The structuring of political cleavages in post-communist societies: the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *Political Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 115–39

FAWN, RICK 2001 'Czech attitudes towards the Roma: "expecting more of Havel's country"?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 53, no. 8, pp. 1193–1219

GHEORGHE, NICOLAE 1991 'Roma-Gypsy ethnicity in Eastern Europe', *Social Research*, vol. 58, no. 4, pp. 829–35

—— 1997 'The social construction of Romani identity', in Thomas Acton (ed.), *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 153–63

GOFFMAN, ERVING 1975 *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Harmondsworth: Penguin books

GURR, TED ROBERT and HARFF, BARBARA 1994 *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press

GUY, WILL 2001 'The Czech lands and Slovakia: another false dawn?', in Will Guy (ed.), *Between Past and Future. The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 285–323

HAUGHTON, TIM 2001 'HZDS: The ideology, organisation and support base of Slovakia's most successful party' *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 53, no. 5, pp. 745–69

KYMLICKA, WILL 2000 'Nation-building and minority rights: comparing West and East' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2, 183–212

MCADAM, DOUG, MCCARTHY, JOHN D. and ZALD, MAYER N. (eds) 1996 *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures and Cultural Framings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
PALOUŠ, MARTIN 1998a 'Forward', in Mesfin Gedlu (ed.), *The Roma and Europe. Romové a Evropa*, Štiřín Castle: Institute of International Relations, pp. 11–12
—— 1998b 'Opening remarks', in Mesfin Gedlu (ed.), *The Roma and Europe. Romové a Evropa*, Štiřín Castle: Institute of International Relations, pp. 15–19
PER (Project on Ethnic Relations) 2001 *Leadership, Representation and the Status of the Roma*, Princeton: Project on Ethnic Relations
PLICHTOVÁ, JANA 1993 'Czechoslovakia as a multi-cultural state in the context of the region', in Minority Rights Group (ed.), *Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe*, London, pp. 11–18
POPESCU, MARINA and HANNAVY, MARTIN 2002 *Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe*, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections> [March 2002]
PUXON, GRATTAN 2000 'The Romani movement: rebirth and the first World Romani Congress in retrospect', in Thomas Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle. Commitment in Romani Studies*, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 94–113
REYNOLDS, MATTHEW and HABŠUDOVÁ, ZUZANA 2001 'Pál Csáky: SMK not "byzantine swindlers" (interview)', *The Slovak Spectator*, vol. 7, no. 4
SLOVAK GOVERNMENT 1999 'Report submitted by the Slovak Republic pursuant to article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities', Bratislava: Office of the Government
SOBOTKA, EVA 2001 'Crusts from the table: policy formation towards Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia', *Roma Rights*, no. 2–3, pp. 66–70
SOYSAL, YASEMIN N. 1996 'Changing citizenship in Europe', in David Cesarani and Mary Fulbrook (eds), *Citizenship, Nationality and Migration in Europe*, London, New York: Routledge, pp. 17–29
ŠTATISTICKÝ ÚRAD SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY 2002, *Sčitanie obyvatel'ov, domov a bytov*, <http://www.statistics.sk > [March 2002]
THE ECONOMIST 2000 'Are they a nation?', *The Economist*, vol. 357, no. 8198, pp. 61–62
VLÁDA ČESKÉ REPUBLIKY 1999a 'Report submitted by the Czech Republic pursuant to article 25, paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities', Praha: Uřad vlády České republiky
—— 1999b 'Conception of the government policy towards members of the Roma community to facilitate their social integration, 279/1999', Praha: Uřad Vlády České Republiky
VLÁDA SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY 1996 'Resolution to the proposal of the activities and measures in order to solve the problems of the citizens in need of special care, 310/1996', Bratislava: Úrad Vlády Slovenskej republiky
—— 1999 'Resolution on the strategy of the government of the Slovak Republic for the solution of the problems of the Roma national minority and the set of measures for its implementation, first stage, 821/1999', Bratislava: Úrad Vlády Slovenskej republiky
WOLCHIK, SHARON 1995 'The politics of transition and the break-up of Czechoslovakia', Jiří Musil (ed.) *The End of Czechoslovakia*, Budapest, London, New York: Central European University Press, pp. 225–44

PETER VERMEERSCH is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Political Science and East European Politics, University of Leuven.
ADDRESS: University of Leuven (KU Leuven), Department of Political Science, E. Van Evenstraat 2B, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium. Email: <Peter.Vermeersch@soc.kuleuven.ac.be>