

# The Dark Unknown History

White Paper on Abuses and Rights Violations Against Roma in the 20th Century



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Ministry of Culture  
Sweden

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# Preface

In March 2014, the then Minister for Integration Erik Ullenhag presented a White Paper entitled 'The Dark Unknown History'. It describes an important part of Swedish history that had previously been little known.

The White Paper has been very well received. Both Roma people and the majority population have shown great interest in it, as have public bodies, central government agencies and local authorities. This is very encouraging – broad support means that we are well placed to increase knowledge about our history, of which anti-Gypsyism is a part. A greater understanding of our history will enable the effective development of long-term initiatives for Roma inclusion.

Roma must have full access to their human rights. We must therefore ensure that knowledge about the Roma's situation is spread far and wide. Knowledge is our weapon against prejudice and discrimination. But it is time to move from words to action. We must act resolutely.

The Commission against anti-Gypsyism, comprising both Roma and non-Roma, has been instructed by the Government to ensure concerted action on measures to combat anti-Gypsyism. This includes spreading knowledge and identifying effective measures and methods to combat and prevent anti-Gypsyism. The Commission has also been tasked with developing educational materials based on the White Paper to be used in all Swedish schools. Other stakeholders may also benefit from the knowledge that we intend to present both simply and clearly. International interest in the White Paper has also been significant. In many countries, both government and civil society representatives have welcomed the White Paper and the recognition it may bring for the victims of anti-Gypsyism.

In the fight for equal rights for Roma, a historical document of this kind has an important role to play. My hope is that this translation will increase knowledge about the situation of Roma, speed up action on Roma rights and inspire change.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in this work, in particular all the Roma who, with dignity and courage, have shared their families' history.

I would also like to thank former Minister Erik Ullenhag, who with his genuine commitment and a good dose of persistency won the trust of Sweden's Roma and brought this important White Paper to fruition.

Alice Bah Kuhnke

Minister for Culture and Democracy

# Preface

Thanks to Angelina Dimiter Taikon, Bagir Kwiek, Barbro Gustavsson, Birgitta Hellström, Bror Sandberg, Diana Nyman, Eleonor Frankemo, Hans Caldaras, Hilikka Grönfors, Juha Nyman, Kurt Magnusson, Marie Johansson Bergman, Mikael Demeter Taikon, Peter Johansson, Peter Lindberg, Rose-Marie Wallengren, Rosa Taikon, Singoalla Millon, Singoalla Rosana Cilione, Stig-Ove Lundahl, Sonny Jenfjord, Sonya Taikon, Soraya Post, Thereza Eriksson, Tommy Lindgren and Yveka Johansson. Thank you for sharing your memories and your lives. You and other Roma have opened my eyes and given me an understanding of the discrimination and abuse that were, and still are, a part of the day-to-day lives of Roma.

Sweden's treatment of Roma and Travellers has a dark history. The first part of the 20th century involved pure racial ideology, the utmost form of which effectively stated that Roma should not live in Sweden. Roma mothers were not permitted to use maternal health services and sterilisation was used to prevent Roma genes from being passed on. In the second part of the 20th century, racial ideology was gradually erased and replaced with the welfare state's surveys and monitoring. Social interventions to help Roma were deployed, but this was done without consulting those who would be affected by these measures. Quite simply, Roma were not regarded as being able to understand what was best for them.

This White Paper contains a range of strong testimonies from witnesses who describe the abuse suffered by Roma. Many of these testimonies make for painful reading and I am profoundly grateful that these people have chosen to share their experiences and stories and those of their families.

My hope is that this part of Sweden's history will be made known. The intention is to produce a shorter version of the White Paper that will be distributed to schools, as well as in other parts of society. The production and dissemination of the content of this White Paper is an important part of the work involved in the Swedish Government's strategy for Roma inclusion (Government Communication 2011/12:56). Lack of knowledge about Roma and the abuse and rights violations they have been subjected to contributes to laying the bulk of the blame for their current exclusion on the Roma themselves. This lack of knowledge perpetuates a gap in trust that is common between Roma and the rest of society. That the Government is now recognising and distancing itself from the historical abuse will, I hope, be seen as an important acknowledgement of all those who have been victims. Our historical treatment of Sweden's Roma is something to be ashamed of. Allow us to now ensure that we have a future that we can be proud of.

Finally, I would like to thank all those whose time and dedication has helped produce this White Paper, the group of experts comprising Rosita Grönfors, Angelina Dimiter Taikon, Diana Nyman, Eleonor Frankemo, Stefano Kuzhiov, Marian Wydow and Mujo Halilovic, as well as the staff at the Ministry of Employment.

Erik Ullenhag

Minister for Integration

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# 1 Points of departure

## 1.1 Background

Work at the Government Offices of Sweden on drawing up a White Paper on the abuse and rights violations suffered by Roma began in spring 2011. Less than a year later the Delegation for Roma Issues had shown in the report “Roma Rights – a strategy for Roma in Sweden” (SOU 2010:55) that the human rights of Roma are being violated and that Roma are excluded from substantial parts of society. The vulnerability of Roma is most evident in schools and in the labour and housing markets. The Delegation also pointed out that the history of Roma in Sweden is largely unexplored and that there is limited knowledge of their situation.

The Delegation proposed a national strategy containing measures in the areas it identified as strategically important to the removal of barriers affecting opportunities for Roma to enjoy their rights. The report also proposed that a truth and reconciliation commission be established to map and document the abuse, maltreatment and discriminatory measures perpetrated against Roma over the course of the 20th century. The Delegation believed that such a commission could be an important tool in bridging the gap in trust between Roma and the majority society in Sweden.

The responses from the referral bodies considering the Delegation's proposals indicate that shedding light on the past is vital to the task of the situation and conditions of Roma today. Likewise, many of the participants in the meetings organised by the Government Offices during the referral period were in favour of documenting the abuse and discriminatory measures perpetrated against Roma in order to raise the level of knowledge about how Roma have been treated. According to many who attended the

meetings, an apology from the State would constitute both a significant acknowledgement and redress. However, some participants were of the opinion that the term reconciliation was unrealistic and could be interpreted as implying that Roma are themselves responsible for the treatment they have been made to endure. Furthermore, several participants had doubts about a commission and several concerns were voiced. The Government's assessment is that there are neither reasons to await a more thorough account of the wrongs that have been committed in the past nor any need of a historical justification, for the Government to deploy the initiatives required to close the welfare gap that exists between Roma and the rest of the population.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 Aim of the White Paper

The communication “A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032” (Government Communication 2011/12:56) sets out the Government's long-term policy for improving the living conditions of Roma and guaranteeing their human rights. Important requirements for implementing the strategy are that this work be characterised by Roma participation and Roma influence, focusing on enhancing and continuously monitoring Roma access to human rights at the local, regional and national level.<sup>2</sup>

The Government agrees with the Delegation's assessment that the situation of Roma today is bound up with their history and the discrimination many of them have long been subjected to. Knowledge of this history and its connection with current conditions for Roma is thus important to the Government's efforts to improve their living conditions.

The Government also shares the Delegation's opinion that there is a widespread ignorance of the abuse and rights violations that Roma have been subjected to throughout history. The Government

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<sup>1</sup> Government Communication 2011/12:56, A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032, page 7f.

<sup>2</sup> Government Communication 2011/12:56, A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032, page 9

believes that a White Paper describing this history is an important basis for any successful endeavour concerning the rights of Roma.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the White Paper is to give some acknowledgement to the victims and their families and to create of the situation of the Roma minority today by shedding historical light on the abuse suffered by Roma and how stereotypes and prejudices have emerged and been passed on from one generation to the next, and also how these have been allowed to form the basis of state policy.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.3 Discrimination – an everyday part of the lives of Roma**

The discrimination suffered by Roma has been established and described in several contexts. As early as 2004, the then Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination stressed that discrimination against Roma was serious and that there was a lack of awareness of the State's historical responsibility for much of this discrimination.<sup>5</sup> The Equality Ombudsman (DO) considers Roma to still be subjected to discrimination, which takes place relatively openly. The discrimination frequently takes place in everyday situations such as when Roma women, often with their children, are buying food, visiting shops and restaurants or taking the bus. In addition, the Roma population's experiences of discrimination in the housing market shed light on ill practices that create insecurity in their living situations. These might take the form of neighbours circulating list of signatures and petitions against Roma moving in, or overreacting to disturbances.<sup>6</sup> The Roma population's experiences of the housing market, social services and the education system demonstrate that discrimination is a large and

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<sup>3</sup> Government Communication 2011/12:56, A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032, page 7

<sup>4</sup> Government Communication 2011/12:56, A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032, page 9

<sup>5</sup> Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), Discrimination against Roma in Sweden.

<sup>6</sup> DO (2011), Roma rights – Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma, pages 57–58.

complex social problem.<sup>7</sup> Discrimination in one area often affects access to rights in other areas:

“The discrimination and structural obstacles that anti-Gypsyism represents in one area of society have an impact on rights in other areas and thus have consequences for society as a whole. Discrimination of Roma in the housing market is affecting Roma children’s chances of uninterrupted school attendance, which also affects their chances of an education on equal terms. This in turn affects their chances of entering the labour market.”<sup>8</sup>

The Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination and Save the Children established that in several of the situations in which Roma are discriminated against, children are present and witness how their parents are subjected to discrimination and prejudice.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the National Agency for Education points out that Roma children are subjected to discrimination within the education system.<sup>10</sup> Save the Children is of the opinion that school is a place where Roma children often feel they receive confirmation that they come up short and fail to meet the requirements.<sup>11</sup> This should be regarded against a background in which there is a general connection between a pupil’s success in school and their parents educational attainment.<sup>12</sup> The conditions for Roma children in school should also be interpreted against a background in which

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<sup>7</sup> DO (2011), Roma rights – Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma. Cf. SOU 2011:29, Samlat, genomtänkt och uthålligt? En utvärdering av regeringens nationella handlingsplan för mänskliga rättigheter 2006–2009 [Comprehensive, considered and sustainable? An evaluation of the Swedish Government’s national action plan for human rights 2006–2009], which points out that Roma are subjected to discrimination and exclusion from most areas of Swedish society, page 406.

<sup>8</sup> DO (2011), Roma rights – Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma, pages 62.

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2008), Discrimination of national minorities in the education system; Save the Children (1998), Vi är rädda att förlora våra barn [We are afraid we will lose our children].

<sup>10</sup> DO (2011), Roma rights – Discrimination, paths of redress and how the law can improve the situation of Roma; Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2008), Discrimination of national minorities in the education system; National Agency for Education (2007), Romer i skolan – en fördjupad studie [Roma in school – an in-depth study]; Ombudsman for Children in Sweden (2005), De vill att jag ska vara osynlig [They wish that I was invisible].

<sup>11</sup> Save the Children (1998), Vi är rädda att förlora våra barn [We are afraid we will lose our children] p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> National Agency for Education, Memo, Betyg och studieresultat, Gymnasieskolan, Läsåret 2010/11 [Grades and educational attainment, Upper secondary schools, School year 2010/11].



there are few schools capable of giving visibility to and confirming the culture, history and language of this minority.<sup>13</sup>

The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) concludes, based on an analysis of the hate crime statistics, that the most common hate crimes committed against Roma are threats, abuse and verbal infringements. Characteristic of hate crimes committed against Roma is that they take place everywhere, from shops to laundry rooms and in or close to the victim's home. It is also typical that the culprit is unknown to the victim.<sup>14</sup>

The Roma population's experiences of discrimination and insufficient access to rights in Sweden cannot be seen in isolation from what is happening all around Europe. The Council of Europe is of the opinion that anti-Gypsyism is deeply rooted in Europe. The discrimination Roma are subjected to seriously curtails their opportunities to define the life they wish to live themselves. One effect of this is that Roma are disavowed by and not made visible in the majority community. The Council states that Roma have a right to participate in deciding how European societies will be shaped. Of particular concern is that Roma are frequently singled out as a danger to society by politicians seeking to score points with demands for strong action against minorities. The fact that Roma are still subjected to unjustified arrests and collective refusals of entry and deportations is, according to the Council, an expression of discrimination and anti-Gypsyism that has not been seriously questioned or opposed.<sup>15</sup>

## 1.4 Historical description of abuse and rights violations

The Swedish Government feels that the descriptions in this White Paper should start at the beginning of the last century.<sup>16</sup> In order to

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<sup>13</sup> 13 Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2008), Discrimination of national minorities in the education system.

<sup>14</sup> BRÅ (2012) Hate Crime 2012 – Statistics on self-reported exposure to hate crime and police reports with identified hate crime motives.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe (2012), Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe.

<sup>16</sup> The history of Roma in Sweden is longer still, refer to Norma Montesino Parra's Zigenarfrågan: Intervention och romantik [The gypsy question: Intervention and romance] for a review of the regulations that guided policy concerning Roma prior to this period.

avoid bringing up issues and circumstances that could constitute criminal acts not yet beyond the statute of limitations, which should be dealt with by the justice system, this White Paper covers conditions for Roma in the 20th century.

One of its tasks is to place the circumstances described in a historical context using an account of the historical outlook and political context. This means that, as far as possible, this White Paper documents the values, outlooks and attitudes of the time. Such an approach can provide support for those who wish to critically scrutinise the negative conceptions that still affect the lives of many Roma to this day. By describing the historical context, this White Paper can contribute to an of the current situation for the Roma minority.<sup>17</sup>

The principle of equal treatment, as recognised in international conventions on human rights, guides the interpretation of what may be considered to have been abusive or discriminatory measures against Roma. The term “human rights” denotes rights that states, through agreements, have committed themselves to guarantee individuals in order to protect them from encroachments on their fundamental freedoms. Human rights are a unified system of norms designed to ensure that official power is discharged with respect for the individual. Many of the measures described in this White Paper were implemented before the international conventions on human rights entered into force. An international convention is not retroactively applicable.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the obligations only apply to convention states from the point in time at which the convention entered into force. The abuse described in this White Paper, and that would now be regarded as contravening human rights conventions, was thus not necessarily in contravention of the regulations applicable at the time.

The abuse described here takes place over a period of one hundred years. Over the course of this period, responsibility for oversight and the general sense of justice have changed. Far from presenting and problematizing all the enactments or aspects of the

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<sup>17</sup> Government Communication 2011/12:56, A coordinated long-term strategy for Roma inclusion 2012–2032, page 8.

<sup>18</sup> This principle has found its expression in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, which was opened for signature in Vienna on 23 May 1969 and entered into force on 27 January 1980.

legislation, this White Paper provides a number of examples that combine to paint a picture of the policies and measures that have been significant in, and have contributed to, the perpetuation of prejudice against Roma and underpinned State policy.

### **1.4.1 Anti-Gypsyism**

Anti-Gypsyism is a perspective on the rights of Roma that guides the analysis in the concluding chapter of this White Paper. The term makes clear the hostility and prejudice that specifically affects Roma. The report “Roma Rights – a strategy for Roma in Sweden” (SOU 2010:55) provides a definition of anti-Gypsyism that captures the complexity of its manifestations and its impact on the conditions of Roma.

“Anti-Gypsyism is a persistent latent structure of ideas hostile to Roma as a collective that manifests itself on an individual level as attitudes, in the culture as myths, ideology, folk traditions and imagery and in actions – social and legal discrimination, political mobilisation against Roma and collective or state violence – which results in and/or aims to alienate, drive away or wipe out Roma simply because they are Roma.”<sup>19</sup>

## **1.5 Interviews and consultations**

The archive materials examined by the Government Offices of Sweden rarely describe how Roma themselves have perceived their living conditions. Only occasionally does this material reveal the impact of certain measures on the individual. An important source of knowledge about the outward expression and impact of discrimination is thus the experiences of Roma themselves. Twenty-seven interviews have been conducted in order to capture the views and experiences Roma have of Swedish society. All of the interviewees have stated that they wish their names to appear and that they would like these interviews to be an important contribution of relevance to the wider Roma community.

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<sup>19</sup> SOU 2010:55, Roma Rights – a strategy for Roma in Sweden, page 166.

The interviews have a central role in the various chapters of this White Paper and are reproduced in each of the chapters in the form of inserted quotations. Each of the interviews provides insight into and knowledge about the experiences Roma have of Swedish society's mechanisms of exclusion. What many of the interviewees share is that their stories contain similarities in terms of how negative conceptions about Roma have affected their lives and identities. The stories provide knowledge about what it has been and is like to live in a country where anti-Gypsyism and discrimination still survive. Knowledge of how Roma have been affected – tangibly, up-close and in everyday life – is important for making society aware of the policies that have affected conditions for Roma in Sweden. Revealing the stories of Roma is in itself an important acknowledgement of the historical injustices that have affected this group.

The Roma consultation group attached to the Government Offices of Sweden has been consulted about the direction of this White Paper on a number of occasions. In addition, the Government Offices have regularly met with a group of experts consisting of seven representatives of Roma organisations. The group has provided important points of view and analysis of the abuse and rights violations described in this White Paper. They have studied the texts and provided valuable points of view that have guided the direction of this White Paper and how the work to produce it has been conducted. The group of experts, which unanimously supports the White Paper, consists of Angelina Dimiter Taikon, Diana Nyman, Eleonor Frankemo, Marian Wydow, Mujo Halilovic, Rosita Grönfors and Stefano Kuzhikov.

## **1.6 Archive material and investigations**

This White Paper depicts and sheds light on society's abuse of Roma in the 20th century, the century of the modern welfare state. The welfare model and social policy founded in Sweden during the 1930s and 1940s dominated the post-war period's notions of state and societal responsibilities. Constitutional and international protection of freedom and rights also emerged over the course of

the 20th century in order to guarantee a wide range of human rights.

The objective and impartial attempt to shed light on the historical context in which stereotypes and prejudices emerged and persisted from generation to generation is a delicate task. There are a great deal of historical accounts of the period in question. However, there are few historical descriptions of the conditions for Roma in this period. Research and knowledge about the way anti-Gypsyism has affected the living conditions of Roma has had an obscured role in Swedish and international research and political discussion.<sup>20</sup>

Consequently, there is good reason to make it clear that this White Paper can neither fill all the gaps in our knowledge nor describe or evaluate the full historical context. More knowledge and debate about the conditions for Roma from a historical perspective are welcomed from other sources.

The documentation on which this White Paper is based consists largely of archive material that has been drawn up by committees specifically tasked with illuminating issues affecting Roma. Archive materials affecting Roma from central and local government authorities have also been used. Much of the documentation forming the basis of this White Paper does not use the term Roma, rather it uses the terms "tattare" (\*) and "gypsies"; to some extent these correspond to Roma, a group that has been recognised as a national minority in Sweden since 1999. The policy of recognising minorities derives from international conventions to which Sweden is party. The Government Bill *From Recognition to Empowerment – the Government's Strategy for the National Minorities (Govt. Bill 2008/09:158)* states that "individuals decide for themselves

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<sup>20</sup> Palosuo, Laura (2009), En inventering av forskningen om romer i Sverige [An inventory of research concerning Roma in Sweden]; Office of the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination (2004), Discrimination against Romanies in Sweden. Report from DO's project in 2002 and 2003 concerning measures to prevent and combat ethnic discrimination of Roma; Living History Forum (2011), Romers kulturella och språkliga rättigheter – vägar mot ett förverkligande [The cultural and linguistic rights of Roma – pathways towards realisation]; Living History Forum (2007), Den svenska rasbiologins idéhistoriska rötter, en inventering av forskningen [Swedish racial biology's roots in the history of ideas, an inventory of the research]; Council of Europe (2012), Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe.

(\*) The term "tattare" is a derogatory term primarily used by the majority population in Sweden to denote Travellers and sometimes Roma.

whether they consider themselves to belong to a national minority and wish to avail themselves of the protection and support offered by society to that minority. Minority status is thus based on individual self-identification and ethnic affinity with the group.” This White Paper reveals the public authorities' categorisation processes and places “tattare” and “gypsies” within quotation marks in order to make it clear that these terms are ascribed identities and designations.

The documentation consists of public records containing memoranda, background material, minutes of meetings, etc. In Sweden it is a fundamental principle that documents received and stored by public authorities are accessible to the general public.<sup>21</sup> The same applies to documentation drawn up internally that has been dealt with or belongs to closed cases, for example communications to third parties, minutes and decisions.<sup>22</sup>

Official documents will only be made confidential if there is specific support for this in law.<sup>23</sup> Information about individuals' personal circumstances that forms the basis for the work on this White Paper has been protected by confidentiality in the Government Offices in accordance with the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Ordinance (2009:641). All documents drawn up or received that concern individual interviewees have been stored in a safe. All names in the archive material have been encoded and in other respects anonymised in order to protect the persons the material concerns.

The Government Offices have engaged around ten people, mainly historians and students, in order to gain further knowledge about the circumstances affecting the lives of Roma in the 20th century. The investigations shed light on specific events that may provide a picture of the abuses against Roma. This White Paper continually presents the archives and other sources that form the basis of its descriptions of the abuse and rights violations committed against Roma in the 20th century.

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<sup>21</sup> Freedom of the Press Act (TF) Chapter 2, Section 3.

<sup>22</sup> TF Chapter 2, Section 7.

<sup>23</sup> TF Chapter 2, Section 2.

## 1.7 Outline of the White Paper

It is not possible to capture all of the events that had an impact on the living conditions of Roma or to depict the life stories of all Roma in the 20th century within the scope of this White Paper. The official material that has been produced describing the policies pursued at both the local and the national level is very comprehensive. This White Paper's account of the 20th century has concentrated on the policies that emerged as a specific policy area in the 20th century. It primarily describes this relatively well-documented policy area using the government agencies' actions towards Roma, as well as the areas that Roma have identified as important in their dialogue with the Government Offices.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, this White Paper is not a purely chronological account; instead it has a thematic structure and contains the following chapters.

### *Surveys of Roma*

The second chapter reveals the survey of individuals' backgrounds, character and behaviour, a practice that was conducted until well into the 1990s by government committees of inquiry and public authorities such as the Institute for Racial Biology, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Employment Board, as well as by municipal administrations.

### *Sterilisation and children taken into care*

The third chapter describes the law that, from 1934 until 1974, prescribed sterilisation under certain circumstances. The chapter elucidates the context, background and origin of the sterilisation issue. The chapter also looks at how the sterilisation legislation was applied to Roma in the middle of the century.

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<sup>24</sup> Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK, Memorandum from the Government Offices of Sweden's consultation with Roma concerning this White Paper, 19/01/2012.

*Entry ban and regulated immigration*

The fourth chapter describes the law that, from 1914 until 1954, specifically ordered a ban on Roma entering Sweden. The chapter sets out the context, origin and application of this entry ban on Roma. The issue of whether the policy enacted after 1954, when the entry ban on Roma was repealed, involved a change is also considered.

*Access of Roma to housing*

The fifth chapter reveals how the access of Roma to housing has been affected by municipalities preventing and making it more difficult for them to settle permanently, and the effect this has on conditions for Roma in general.

*Access of Roma to education*

The sixth chapter looks at the attitudes that have affected the access Roma have to education and what motives and working practices led to Roma children being placed in remedial or separate classes.

*Access of Roma to work*

The seventh chapter presents some of the acts and ordinances that have affected opportunities for Roma to take control of their own social and economic situation. It also reveals those measures involving adult and vocational education that came to dominate government authorities' efforts to get Roma into the regular labour market at the end of the 1960s.

*Concluding discussion*

The eighth and final chapter analyses, from the perspective of equal treatment and anti-Gypsyism, the general societal circumstances



that have contributed to the exposure of Roma to abuse and rights violations.



## 2 Surveys of Roma

### 2.1 Introduction

Thousands of people in Sweden were registered as “tattare” and “gypsies” throughout the 20th century. The first initiative for a systematic form of registration was taken by a government committee of inquiry at the beginning of the 20th century, with several further inventories subsequently being made. The practice of registering Roma has survived extensive structural changes to society such as the process of democratisation in the early 20th century and the construction of the welfare state in subsequent decades.

“A journalist showed me a document from the 'tattare inventory' from the 1940s. I was only a few months old when the inventory was drawn up. I'm in it, along with my whole family. The inventory was in preparation for Nazi Germany. That's what I believe. If Sweden had been occupied and the Germans had come here, I wouldn't have been alive today. I understood, when I saw what's recorded about me and my family, why I was taken into care as a child. The fact that all documents state that I'm a Traveller has haunted me all these years. All of these papers in which I'm registered ... society never regarded me as an individual, rather I was part of a group that should be eradicated. My life has been marked by the fact that my ethnicity has been included in all documents. If this hadn't been recorded, I would have had a different life. This documentation about me and my family is punishment for a crime I'm innocent of.” Kurt Magnusson<sup>25</sup>

“We don't want registration. We don't want to be registered. Roma have been counted and registered enough over the years. We're tired of registration, research and documentation. There are millions of pages about Roma in the archives. An enormous amount of information. But they don't talk about it. Doctoral theses have been

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Kurt Magnusson, 1 June 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

written about us. For example, around 20 investigations of Roma were conducted between 1965 and 1975. But if we were to ask for money to conduct research that we ourselves think is important, then there's no money. It's never us who are the experts and who get to decide what we need to know more about. It's always others, non-Roma.” Angelina Dimiter Taikon and Mikael Demetri Taikon<sup>26</sup>

This chapter describes several systematic processes for registering Roma that continued up until the very recent past. The aim is not just to describe the survey process in terms of what was actually registered and written about individuals' backgrounds, character and behaviour, but also to attempt to find answers to the question of what motivated the establishment of these registers. The account in this chapter is based on a review of the archives of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Employment Board, the Gypsy Inquiry Committee and the City of Stockholm archive. This chapter is also based on a study by the historian Lena Ericsson, *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The gypsy section in the City of Stockholm 1958–1997].<sup>27</sup>

This White Paper describes circumstances in Sweden; however, registers that code or state ethnicity are or were not unique to Sweden. At the beginning of the 20th century, several European countries produced statistical data that was used as a tool for measures targeting the very existence of Roma. A “Gypsy Information Bureau” was established in Germany, its task being to register all Roma in the country. Roma were declared to be a threat that must be protected against. The threat of “racial mixing” was specifically cautioned against. This register was subsequently used to identify and deport Roma to concentration camps.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Angelina Dimiter Taikon and Mikael Demetri Taikon, 2 and 5 June. 2013. Ref.no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>27</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2013), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholm 1958–1997* [The gypsy section in the City of Stockholm 1958–1997]. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>28</sup> Jansson, Karl-Axel & Schmid, Ingemar (2005), “Före folkmordet” [“Before the genocide”] in Jansson & Schmid (Eds.), *Ett fördrivet folk. Antologi om förtryck och diskriminering av romer/zigenare/resande* [A banished people. An anthology of oppression and discrimination against Roma/Gypsies/Travellers], pages 24–26; cf. also pages 70–71 in the same anthology; Barsony, Janos & Agnes Daroczi (2008), “Chronology – the Pharrajamos in the Third Reich” in Barsony & Daroczi (Eds.), *Pharrajamos, the Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*, page 13; Johansen, Jahn Otto (2008), *Sigoynerne “Forfulgt i århundrer”* [The Gypsies “Persecuted for centuries”] in Hagtvet, Bernt (Ed.), *Folkmordenes svarte bok* [The black book of genocide]; Bruchfeld, Stéphane & Levine, Paul A. (2010), *Tell*

There is a long history in Sweden of official statistics registering data of various kinds. The Bureau of Statistical Tables (Tabellverket) was established as early as 1749, and was superseded in 1858 by Statistics Sweden (Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB). In his paper on the role of statistics in the nation-building of the 19th century, the historian Henrik Höjer argues that the principal area covered by statistics was the population, the factor regarded in the 18th century as the most relevant to general well-being and progress. The Swedish Church's population register was used as a basis for data gathering and for the national population register. This register was transferred from the Church to the tax agencies in 1991. Höjer contends that by having greater knowledge of the demographic, economic and social circumstances, common national frames of reference would be created and thus "a form of national spirit" would be expressed. It was also possible, with the help of statistics, to measure oneself against other nations involved in the international competition for success and growth. The statistics were seen as unimpeachable and an honest portrayal of reality. From the 19th century onwards, they were also used by government authorities and the state to decide which interventions could encourage the development of society.<sup>29</sup>

Research in recent years has reassessed how these statistics were conceived and has shown that discipline and subordination are often central themes. The statistics have been analysed as social constructions and part of the exercise of power. By studying the categorisations that guided statistical data, it is possible to learn about the frameworks within which the public authorities think and act and about the patterns and notions that have been and still may be significant to the conditions of minorities.<sup>30</sup> Using these as

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Ye Your Children ... A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945 – with a new chapter about Sweden and the Holocaust, page 16.

<sup>29</sup> Höjer, Henrik (2001), Svenska siffror. Nationell integration och identifikation genom statistik 1800–1870 [Swedish figures. National integration and identification through statistics 1800–1870].

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Harvard, Jonas & Nilsson, Torbjörn (2011), "Det offentliga tryck. Källorna som styr svensk historieforskning" ["The public records. Sources that have directed Swedish historical research"] in Förhammar, Harvard & Lindström (Eds.), *Dolt i offentligheten. Nya perspektiv på traditionellt källmaterial* [Hidden in the public records. New perspectives on traditional source material], page 170.

a basis, this White Paper will reveal the perspectives and objectives that have guided the process of categorising Roma.

## 2.2 The Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief 1907– 1921

The first government committee of inquiry that gave public authorities the task of undertaking inventories in order to register Roma in Sweden was the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief. The Committee was appointed in 1907 and submitted four reports.<sup>31</sup> The Committee's last report, *Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling* [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants] (SOU 1923:2), became the first of a long series of inquiries concerning vagrancy legislation. This legislation would go on to survive well into the second half of the 20th century – in fact it would take six additional official reports before the Vagrancy Act was repealed in 1965. The historian Johan Edmar contends that it was then replaced by a very similar act concerning “antisocial behaviour threatening to society”. This was only repealed fully in conjunction with the social services reforms of 1982.<sup>32</sup>

At the turn of the century, many motions, statements, reports and debates in the Riksdag stressed that the way of life of “tattare” were a threat to society. A statistical five-year report for 1886–1890 states that “tattare” lived according to their own laws and that they terrorised the local population.<sup>33</sup> A recurring issue involved whether “tattare” and “gypsies” could be shoehorned into the social order. These discussions largely revolved around whether Roma as a group were willing, or rather unwilling, to work.

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<sup>31</sup> In 1911 the Committee presented a proposal for an alcoholics act, in 1915 a proposal for a poor relief act and legislation concerning juvenile delinquents, in 1921 it submitted a report on public child welfare and in 1923 proposals for a revision of the Vagrancy Act of 1885.

<sup>32</sup> Edman, Johan (2008), “Lösdrivarlagen och den samhällsfarliga lättjan” [“The Vagrancy Act and the idleness that threatens society”] in *Villkorandets politik: Fattigdomens premisser och samhällets åtgärder – då och nu* [The politics of conditions: Assumptions about poverty and society's endeavours – then and now].

<sup>33</sup> Statistics Sweden (1895), *Bidrag till Sveriges officiella statistik, Kungl. Maj:ts Befallningshafvandes femårsberättelse 1886–1890, Hallands län* [Contribution to Sweden's official statistics, His Royal Highness' Commanding Officer's five-year report 1886–1890, Halland County], page 8.

Vagrancy and criminality were regarded as two sides of the same coin; consequently, fostering a working citizen was key.<sup>34</sup>

A motion tabled in the Riksdag around the turn of the century stressed that society had a responsibility for the conditions of “the tattare”:

“It should no longer do to treat these unfortunates simply as troublesome social vermin, the person one attempts to do away with as far as possible without offering charity and compassion, that one treat them as fellow human beings, such as one would want, to some extent, to participate in the advantages and rights of society, on the natural condition that they perform work according to their abilities”.<sup>35</sup>

This Member of the Riksdag was of the opinion that if people had the opportunity to register for the census and thus gain access to good poor relief and access to school, their living conditions would improve significantly.

The parliamentary process concerning this motion shows that objections were raised to the attitude of its proposer. The first chamber stressed that the “tattare's” way of life constituted a threat to society and instead decreed measures to eradicate this way of life.

“The only action that can fully counter and gradually eradicate so-called tattare and comparable persons' wandering, disorderly way of

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<sup>34</sup> Statistics Sweden (1895), *Bidrag till Sveriges officiella statistik*, Kungl. Maj:ts Befallningshafvandes femårsberättelse 1886–1890 [Contribution to Sweden's official statistics, His Royal Highness' Commanding Officer's five-year report 1886–1890], specifically the report from Halland County, Statistics Sweden (1895), page 8, The Second Chamber's motion no. 70, 1897 by Aron Norrman, dean (Member of the Second Chamber, M.S.C.), J. Bengtsson (M.S.C.), A. P. Johansson, farmer (M.S.C.), Carl H. Björck, district medical officer (M.S.C.), Anders Ohlsson (M.S.C.), A. Apelstam, wholesaler (M.S.C.), A. G. Gyllensvärd (Member of the Committee on the Constitution); Committee Report no. II, 1900; *Betänkande och förslag angående vanartade och i sedligt afseende försummade barns behandling* [Report and proposals concerning degenerates and the treatment of morally neglected children], pages 110–117; cf. also a vicar's letter from 1911 and a district judge's letters from 1917 in SOU 1923:2; The Second Chamber's motion no. 234, 1921 by Oscar Osberg (Liberal Coalition Party, LCP; Liberal Party, LP), E:G Nilsson (Farmer's Union, FU), Oskar N. Olsson (Ruralist and Bourgeois Party, RBP), Sven Jönsson (LCP, independent), Cornelius Olsson (RBP), Per Godén (LP). Herman Andersson (Farmers' Independent Group 1921 and FU 1925–), A. Danielsson (LCP, National Liberal Association), And. Lindgren (FU), Carl Arv. Andersson (RBP), Carl Emil Bengtsson (RBP), Oscar Nathanael Olsson (RBP), Svening Alfred Larsson (RBP), F. Block, Per Jonas Edberg (RBP), C. Corneliusson\*, C. G. Olsson, Karl Sigurd Anders Carlsson (RBP), Gustav Johansson (Social Democratic Workers Party) The Second Chamber's minutes no. 17, 1921, pp. 133–140, The Second Chamber's temporary committee, 1921.

<sup>35</sup> The Second Chamber's motion no. 70, 1897, by Aron Norrman, dean (M.S.C.).

life is to remove their children from the influence of their parents and relatives ... if the children are separated from this depraved tribe at an early age ... and given over to be brought up within an institution or by private persons in a place where their parents do not usually appear, they may be brought up to be decent, productive citizens.”<sup>36</sup>

In a motion tabled in the Riksdag in 1921, it was argued, based on racial biology, that action was needed to protect society and the nation from “tattare” and “gypsies”. The motion called for measures that aimed to “free society from gypsies and other tattare”:

“One must ... see this question from the point of view of racial hygiene, if one has a nation's future happiness in view. Look, for example, at how America implacably turns away such immigrants, who could weaken or quite frankly poison the stock through the mixing of blood.”<sup>37</sup>

The Riksdag's members argued that the unsatisfactory state of affairs identified in the motion was of a kind to which the State must give its attention. Roma were said to be a “socially inferior element of society”. And the opinion was that legislation concerning vagrancy and a ban on entry was applicable to this “racial element”. The matter was submitted to a commission of inquiry on legislation concerning poor relief, which took the initiative to decree that the public authorities would register the number of Roma in the country.<sup>38</sup>

Such was the climate at the beginning of the 20th century that led to the basic premises and methods that guided the work of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief. The committee's report (SOU 1923:2) contained proposals for a revision of the Vagrancy Act of 1885 and the committee's definitions of those who had been identified as “tattare” and “gypsies”. The committee's opinion was that “tattare” were a mixed race between “gypsies” and Swedes, which explained why

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<sup>36</sup> The First Chamber's temporary committee no. 1, opinion no. 6. 1897. The question was referred to the Committee for the preparation of the upbringing of juvenile delinquents and degenerate and morally neglected children.

<sup>37</sup> The Second Chamber's motion no. 234, 1921, cf. note 32 concerning which members signed this motion.

<sup>38</sup> The Second Chamber's, second temporary committee, no. 2 1921.



“tattare” were largely settled and had been assimilated, something that could not be said of “the gypsies”.<sup>39</sup>

However, the committee also regarded “tattare” as a “threat to society” and “in some places, a significant detriment to the settled population”.<sup>40</sup> The committee's framing of the problem and its discussions about measures say a good deal about the openly hostile attitude to Roma in Sweden in the 1920s:

“The measures against tattare, which have been taken both here and in other countries over the years, have generally shown themselves to be ineffective .... If something is to be achieved, a range of measures must be implemented that aim to find a possible means by which they are to support themselves and simultaneously tackle their vagabond way of life with unrelenting severity. From the perspective of racial hygiene, it is maintained that these individuals' intermixture with the Swedish stock involves a weakening of our race. Be that as it may, at this point there is currently no chance of preventing this. As this in most cases concerns Swedish citizens, it is not possible to deport them. Nor is it possible to eradicate them using any direct or indirect measure.”<sup>41</sup>

The committee therefore considered that “the solution to the tattare question” was to be found in “shoehorning them into the social order with or without the consent of the tattare” and circumscribing the group's traditional enterprises using various ordinances concerning trade and vagrancy.<sup>42</sup> The committee was of the opinion that “tattare” should be further criminalised as they were tacitly understood to be criminals by their very nature. Their money should be confiscated as it had been obtained “dishonestly” – something the committee assumed since they were “tattare” and thus criminals. The assumption that “tattare” were criminals and the unspoken argument in support of this drawn from racial biology were thus allowed to explain and endorse one another. The committee's reasoning thereby perpetuated itself, something it is also possible to discern later on in the arguments concerning

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<sup>39</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 89.

<sup>40</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 84.

<sup>41</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 85.

<sup>42</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 86 and 89.

recommendations on which people were to be subjected, and were subjected, to sterilisation.

The committee devoted many pages in its report to complaining about the Roma way of life. It anticipated that continued application of the Vagrancy Act and the threat of separating children from their parents under the Child Welfare Act could, in the long term, force Roma to live “in a more orderly manner”:

“A certain disposition to begin living in a more orderly manner should be expected, in that should they continue to live the roaming life they are threatened by the Vagrancy Act and having their children taken away from them under the Child Welfare Act.”<sup>43</sup>

The committee also regarded “gypsies” as an inferior race, but the problems with that group were different to the problem of “tattare”. The committee hoped that by consistently making living conditions worse for “gypsies”, they would decide to leave the country of their own accord.

“As the gypsies' conformation to our society appears to be an insoluble problem, the only expediency is, in one way or another, to get the gypsies out of the country. As the majority of them are probably Swedish subjects and, in any case, their citizenship of another country is difficult to prove, their disappearance from the country cannot be achieved in any other way than by placing such robust restrictions on their freedom of movement that they find it is to their own advantage to leave the country and emigrate to a country that affords them more favourable conditions.”<sup>44</sup>

The committee stressed that it was actually in its work on inventories that the problem with the “tattare and gypsy question” could be framed and the necessary measures taken:

“This initial attempt to gather material to assess the question ... which was obtained from the information received, makes it evident that this concerns a question whose solutions can no longer be dismissed. The cries for the order of things, which from time to time are heard from

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<sup>43</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 89.

<sup>44</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 89.

the countryside, must not fall on deaf ears ... [and] if possible prevent them from continuing with the way of life they have had until now.”<sup>45</sup>

### 2.2.1 Survey's aims and participants

On four occasions, the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief called on the public authorities to take an inventory of the Roma in Sweden. On the latter two occasions, the question was referred to the Minister, who was also head of what was then the Royal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. Government communications gave the Committee the authority to conduct investigations concerning the prevalence of “tattare” and “gypsies” in Sweden.<sup>46</sup>

The first inventory was conducted in conjunction with the appointment of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief in 1907/08. The Committee sent questionnaires to the country's poor relief boards containing questions about those who had applied for poor relief. The form specifically enquired about the extent to which Roma had applied for this support. A sample of the responses from the parishes in Jönköping County, Halland County and Malmöhus County shows that none of these parishes noted that Roma were provided with poor relief.<sup>47</sup> Nor does the official report contain any details from this inventory to indicate that Roma applied for or received poor relief.<sup>48</sup>

The second inventory was conducted at the same time using a form that was sent by the Committee to the country's police authorities. The Committee requested details of how the Vagrancy Act had been applied between 1905 and 1907 and asked for specific information about people who were “tattare” and “gypsies”. The Committee presented this information from the country's police authorities in a table covering vagrancy in its official report (SOU

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<sup>45</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 86.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to the Minister and Head of the Royal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs August Herman Lindqvist on 16/11/1922, YK 213: A1, National Archives; Letter to the Chairman of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief on 22 November 1921, YK 213: A1, National Archives.

<sup>47</sup> Responses from the poor relief boards to the Committee, YK 213: A1, National Archives.

<sup>48</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants].

1923:2). This also contained details of the number of Roma who had been arrested for vagrancy.<sup>49</sup>

In 1921, the Committee produced a third questionnaire for the country's parish civil registration offices to respond to.<sup>50</sup> This time, the aim of the inventory was to achieve “clarity concerning which paths to take in intervening against the tattare and gypsies' itinerancy and a way of life that is a danger to society”. For this reason, the Committee requested data for a new inventory of these groups' number, occupation and circumstances.<sup>51</sup> The Committee was aware that not all of those considered by it to be “gypsies” or “tattare” were included in the parish registers. Consequently, the parish civil registration offices were to list those individuals who “without being definitively listed as tattare or gypsies, could, on the basis of a wandering way of life or otherwise, be regarded as equivalent to them”.<sup>52</sup>

Several parish civil registration offices replied that a number of people were possibly “ramps”, but many were vagrants who could not be classified as either “tattare” or “gypsies”. Others described “tattare” as a scourge on the settled population and that this group's way of life meant that their children's upbringing and schooling was neglected and also that they should be placed in colonies in specifically designated areas. In addition, several parish civil registration offices indicated that the police authorities had more knowledge of the circumstances the committee was inquiring about.<sup>53</sup> The Committee compiled the responses to the questionnaire and then presented in its official report a table containing the numbers of “tattare or persons equivalent to them”, listed by county.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 285–286.

<sup>50</sup> Questionnaire sent to the parish civil registration offices, YK 213: A1, National Archives.

<sup>51</sup> Letter from the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief 30/1/1922 to the Minister and the Head of the Royal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, YK 213: A1, National Archives.

<sup>52</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 338.

<sup>53</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 338.

<sup>54</sup> SOU 1923:3, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 339.

The Committee considered the responses from the country's parish civil registration offices and wanted to take a new inventory, with the questionnaire now being sent to the countries' various police authorities. It thought that the question of how this next inventory would be carried out might also be interesting from the perspective of racial biology. Consequently, it proposed that a professor, also head of the Institute for Racial Biology and "our foremost expert", should take part in the planning and implementing of such an investigation.<sup>55</sup> The Committee therefore applied to the Minister and head of the Royal Ministry of Social Affairs for permission to involve the head of the Institute for Racial Biology in designing the investigation. However, it eventually withdrew this request as the Minister had indicated there were financial misgivings about such a general task. The Committee instead requested that police superintendents and public prosecutors conduct a "narrower" investigation, which was approved by the Minister.<sup>56</sup>

The Committee turned to the police to get answers as to whether there were any "tattare" or "gypsies" living in their area and about how they were housed. The Committee also wanted to find out whether there were Roma other than those who were settled that passed through the district. The police were also asked to assess the Roma children's upbringing and schooling, provide information about criminal prosecutions and punishments and about whether Roma living in the district visited other districts. Finally, the Committee wanted the police authorities to indicate what trouble Roma caused and what measures the police would like to see to tackle such trouble.

### **2.2.2 The Committee's perception of "tattare" and "gypsies"**

What and who did the members of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief have in mind in the questionnaires the Committee produced? Research into racism indicates that one of

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<sup>55</sup> Minutes of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, 4 November 1921, Section 2, YK 213: A1, National Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Minutes of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, 30 January 1922, Section 2, last paragraph. YK 213: A1, National Archives.

the foundations of dichotomisation is a superficial categorisation based on appearance, with an imagined “norm” for comparison. “The others” were ascribed certain phenotypic and/or cultural characteristics. The norm was compared to that which was defined and categorised and to what was perceived to be negative.<sup>57</sup> On this basis, it is relevant to make clear the terms and expressions used by the Committee in the questionnaires. The way in which the terms “tattare” and “gypsy” were defined and used is significant to what was investigated at the local level.

The questionnaire indicates that “tattare” and “gypsies” were regarded as obvious categories and thus easy to identify, define and separate from other inhabitants. The questionnaires go on to state that information was sought about whether Roma were a problem or a burden on society and in what respects they differed from the Swedish majority population. The questions about Roma and their circumstances are thus far from neutral. The inventories became part of state policy concerning how the population was divided, with knowledge being sought about its quality and quantity. Roma were considered to be a threat and a social problem that the Committee sought information about: Where were Roma to be found? How did they live? What measures did the police want the state to take against them?

### 2.2.3 Responses from the police districts

The responses from the police districts were compiled by the Committee and some were presented in full in what came to constitute the official report itself. Based on the responses, the Committee also compiled a table that stated the number of “tattare” and “gypsies” in the country.<sup>58</sup> In addition, it published an appendix to the official report containing a map with black marks denoting where Roma were living in the country.

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<sup>57</sup> SOU 2004:48, Borevi, Karin & Strömblad, Per (2004), “Kategorisering och integration – en introduktion” [“Categorisation and integration – an introduction”] in *Kategorisering och integration. Om föreställda identiteter i politik, forskning, media och vardag* [Categorisation and integration. On imagined identities in politics, research, media and everyday life], page 11 and page 23 ff. in the same report.

<sup>58</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdriivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 339 and 340.

A review of the 680 responses from the police authorities shows that about 200 were encumbered with highly stigmatising notions about Roma. Several police districts described the appearance of Roma as one of the motivations for the district's dissatisfaction with the group. On the whole, Roma were described as being opposite to the rest of the local population in terms of their appearance, morals, customs and way of life. "Dirty", "ugly", "untrustworthy", "troublesome", "dishonest", "crooked", "good-for-nothing", "a danger to society" and "useless" were recurrent descriptions used by the country's police authorities. Some of the responses are reproduced below.<sup>59</sup> Several districts considered Roma to be "completely useless people" who should be "eradicated", "taken into custody" or "deported":

"As they are completely useless people, it would be desirable in all respects if it were possible to use suitable means to expel and eradicate them."<sup>60</sup>

"They are regarded in general to be born deficient and are disapproved of by the settled population wherever they appear. No-one wants to use persons of this race in their service because they are generally regarded as idle and untrustworthy."<sup>61</sup>

"All tattare and gypsies should be taken into custody; the former to afford them an upbringing and to put them to work and the latter to be deported to the country whence they originate. These effective measures could be used to rid ourselves of these parasites ... It is probably now the time something was done to remedy ... this cancer on society".<sup>62</sup>

Proposals were also received for measures to prohibit freedom of movement and of trade. There were also proposals to increase the control of Roma through registration and rules on special permits, passports and the introduction of compulsory reporting. A number of police districts declared that Roma did not live in their district as

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<sup>59</sup> HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>60</sup> Questionnaire response from Torshälla's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>61</sup> Questionnaire response from Åsheda's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>62</sup> Questionnaire response from Järnsköga's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

practices had been developed to make it difficult for Roma to even be in the area. One district explained that:

“Thanks to the general aversion in this district to parties of tattare, no actual nuisances have appeared, perhaps because no sojourn takes place.”<sup>63</sup>

Another district made use of a similar method:

“Here in town, it has probably been possible in part to hinder wandering gypsies by means of the town, as now often occurs, no longer leasing space to such persons ...”<sup>64</sup>

Another police district wrote that:

“Through the consistent application of sustained attentiveness, constant arrests for every offence and ensuing interrogation, detention or warning for vagrancy, all tattare, with the exception of one family, have seen fit to leave the town.”<sup>65</sup>

These responses also reveal that there was a practice in municipalities of driving away Roma by making it more difficult for them to gain access to housing.

“Nuisance arises as a result of their visits as a matter of course ... penalties for those among the villagers who house parties of tattare.”<sup>66</sup>

“It was usually announced in [the local papers] classified advertisements that those of the townspeople who housed tattare would be fined a certain sum, varying between 10 and 25 riksdaler.”<sup>67</sup>

“Since the municipal meeting of 1919, thanks to proclamations etc. challenging the parishioners not to house tattare, the number of tattare has significantly decreased.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Questionnaire response from Bjärträ's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>64</sup> Questionnaire response from Härnösand's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>65</sup> Questionnaire response from Ystad's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Questionnaire response from Malå's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Questionnaire response from Brunflo's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>68</sup> Questionnaire response from Arvidsjaur's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.



“By prevailing on the landowners to refuse to grant them space to set up camp ... the area has been free of their visits.”<sup>69</sup>

“The municipality has decided to buy out the tattare ... In order to induce them to move out of the parish for the sake of poor relief, the municipality has bought all of their flats, which has resulted in the tattare moving away.”<sup>70</sup>

In the opinion of one district, the practice that had developed in municipalities of using fines to expel Roma should be legalised:

“The municipalities occasionally impose fines on those who give charity to tattare and give them shelter, from whom it would of course be impossible to extract such fine. However, it would be of the utmost importance if the municipalities were able to make such a decision lawfully, as the population would be able to lay the blame elsewhere when visited by tattare.”<sup>71</sup>

Several responses indicate that there was no clear connection between those police districts where Roma were living and the proposed measures. There were several districts in which Roma were not living or considered to constitute any nuisance. Nevertheless, many of these districts proposed measures to tackle what was perceived to be a “scourge”. One police district justified its attitude as follows:

“It is, nevertheless, disagreeable to have such transient persons, and their visits are, in general, undesirable.”<sup>72</sup>

Another district, which did not voice any opinion or request any measures, still spoke about “the scourge”:

“The scourge has not made itself felt here and thus there are no specific desiderata.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Questionnaire response from Riseberga's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>70</sup> Questionnaire response from Riseberga's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Questionnaire response from Årjäng's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup> Questionnaire response from Järna's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>73</sup> Questionnaire response from Dikanäs' police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

The measure most frequently requested by the police districts, appearing in 77 responses, was for the migration of Roma to be forbidden or prevented. Several were of the opinion that the provisions in the Vagrancy Act should be toughened, as they believed that Roma deliberately evaded them. Requests that Roma be supervised and that a visiting book, mandatory registration or similar be imposed also occur frequently. One police district stressed that:

“Both tattare and gypsies are an untrustworthy people, thus improved control of their wanderings should be mandated. Every wandering tattare and gypsy should be obliged to carry what may be called a visiting book or similar, issued by the competent police authority in their place of domicile, which the wandering tattare or gypsy would be obliged to produce and have endorsed by the police authorities in the parishes they turn up in. Failure to comply with this should result in an admonition for vagrancy.”<sup>74</sup>

One district believed that control of Roma could be improved using a register of names:

“A register of their names and descriptions should be drawn up. More effective punishments should also be stipulated for tattare, beggars and swindlers. Flogging should be applied. Parents should be made responsible for begging by children over the age of 5.”<sup>75</sup>

Another district also dictated that the control of Roma should be intensified, the reason given being that:

“tattare are slovenly and generally disagreeable.”<sup>76</sup>

In many districts the police requested legislation that would make it more difficult for Roma to get permission to stop in the district and get access to housing. Several police districts were of the opinion that Roma children should be taken into care, which was expressed in the following manner:

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<sup>74</sup> Questionnaire response from Alnö's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>75</sup> Questionnaire response from Verum's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Questionnaire response from Åsele's acting police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

“In future, to remove this scourge, the general desire should be, in part, to place all tattare' children of school age in state-supported schools so that they may learn some occupation.”<sup>77</sup>

“The most effective measure in tackling tattare I believe to be ... that the children be taken from them and boarded with suitable families.”<sup>78</sup>

Other measures proposed were deportation, colonies, sterilisation and restriction on opportunities for Roma to be together with other Roma:

“Tattare and gypsies who are not Swedish citizens should, of course, be deported from the country.”<sup>79</sup>

“Gypsies should be banned from entering the country and treated as undesirable aliens. They cannot be arrested as vagrants as they generally possess sufficient means by which to support themselves.”<sup>80</sup>

“To the extent that individuals such as this may not be deported, the state should intern them for the period of their natural lives or until such time as they desire to support themselves as settled people.”<sup>81</sup>

“Gypsies who are not Swedish subjects should not be permitted to enter the country. Others should be forbidden by law from wandering about. Tattare who are not settled should be taken into custody at workhouses.”<sup>82</sup>

“Putting gypsies into colonies would probably be the only effective means by which to combat their itinerancy.”<sup>83</sup>

“Wherever a group of gypsies appear, they should, without further ado, be taken into custody and returned home under prison guard.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Questionnaire response from Ullared's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>78</sup> Questionnaire response from Tåsjö's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Questionnaire response from Sala's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Questionnaire response [not possible to read the police district] police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>81</sup> Questionnaire response from Lysekil's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>82</sup> Questionnaire response from Frändefors' police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>83</sup> Questionnaire response from Kungsbacka's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

In their response to the Committee, one police district requested robust measures against Roma:

“As a large proportion of gypsies now happen to have been born in Sweden and are invoking the law concerning the acquisition of Swedish citizenship, our country should also be able to accommodate within itself these parasites on the body of society, and the country's inhabitants have their indolent blood engrafted into them. All those gypsies not born here in Sweden should, as undesirables, be sent home to the country whence they came, or be sterilised. Prohibition of marriage between gypsies and pure Aryans should be stipulated.”<sup>85</sup>

The police in another district asked for similar measures:

“An obligation to have permission to itinerate, sterilisation, prohibition of marriage between gypsies and Swedes, a general proscription against gypsy gatherings, posting of specific regulations on horse-trading, a prohibition on tattare peddling.”<sup>86</sup>

The Committee contacted the police districts in Malmö, Jönköping, Gothenburg, Ljusdal and Vaddö separately in order to gain a more extensive report on the Roma in these areas.

The reports produced by these police districts consist of even more detailed registers of Roma with exhaustive biographies of many individuals. These districts produced information on the number of Roma in their respective districts, the number granted permission to peddle, their family circumstances, whether the children were in school, how they supported themselves, their housing conditions, the extent to which they were visited by other Roma, information about where these Roma came from and information from criminal records.<sup>87</sup>

Svartsjö Prison, on its own initiative, drew up a detailed plan of one family's family tree and provided this to the Committee. This plan contained a description of the Roma family members' appearance and family relationships, as well as information about where these people had lived over the course of a number of years.

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<sup>84</sup> Questionnaire response from Lösing's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>85</sup> Questionnaire response from Eksjö's police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>86</sup> Questionnaire response [not possible to read the police district] police superintendent, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>87</sup> HIV:2, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

Criminal records were appended to the register.<sup>88</sup> Selected parts of Svartsjö Prison's description of the Roma family were presented in the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief's official report.<sup>89</sup>

The father in the family is described in the official report as:

“[q]uiet and barely communicative and with a face undisturbed by any emotion. It is difficult to establish any information about what lies deep within, and what emerges from his lips will in most cases be less certain.”<sup>90</sup>

The family's children were described in the following way:

“They appear physically feeble and have a typically sly appearance which sometimes renders a cold smile. ... They are completely uneducable and are slow to comprehend. However, this could very well be caused by their interests being in blatant conflict with their studies.”<sup>91</sup>

#### 2.2.4 How many?

One of the aims of the surveys conducted by the Committee was to establish how many Roma there were in the country. The Committee's summary of the responses from the parish civil registration offices shows that there were 1 268 “tattare” and “gypsies” recorded in the country's parish registers and also 235 people who had been recorded as non-existent. The parish civil registration offices reported that a further 1 072 people were “equivalent to tattare or gypsies”. The Committee interpreted this as meaning “that a proportion probably [were] to be classified as tattare, but that a good deal [were] vagrants who had nothing to do

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<sup>88</sup> Svartsjö Prison, memorandum from 22 August 1922, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>89</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants].

<sup>90</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 356.

<sup>91</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 361.

with gypsies and tattare.”<sup>92</sup> The police districts submitted information about 1 833 people.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.2.5 The police's perception of “tattare” and “gypsies”

The police authorities' responses show that they divided the population into racial group affiliations. “Tattare” and “gypsies” were repeatedly described in the responses to the Committee as clearly defined social groups. Roma were regarded as of a different species to Swedes. What is common in many of the responses is that the combination of the Roma's appearance and way of life constituted an explanation for the police's perceived difficulties with the group.

The police authorities' responses also reflect conditions for Roma in the local community. Several responses state that municipalities had developed practices aimed at driving them away and in general making it difficult for them to exist. Thus they reveal what boundaries the local community erected for Roma and the rights violations they were subjected to at this time.

The police authorities complain in several responses that current legislation allowed these groups to evade the public authorities and police's attempts at supervision and that, consequently, more anti-Roma measures were required.

The stereotypical descriptions of Roma and the exclusion mechanisms recommended by many police districts legitimised and contributed to officialdom's continued determination to define Roma as a threat to society. The National Board of Health and Welfare put this into words in its statement concerning the Committee's official report:

“Within society there is a not insignificant number of individuals who, without having yielded to criminal liability, are to be considered not

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<sup>92</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 338.

<sup>93</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 339.

merely as social parasites, but also as a clear and present danger to the maintenance of law and order.”<sup>94</sup>

The Committee's proposals to tackle “tattare” and “gypsies” were praised by the National Board of Health and Welfare, which emphasised that the official report “offers a wealth of enlightening and interesting information” but that there was a lack of “proposals for a more comprehensive and definitive solution to the problem.” Nor did the National Board of Health and Welfare believe it could take a stance on this “difficult problem” without further research being conducted on the subject.<sup>95</sup>

### 2.2.6 The vagrancy question in government committees of inquiry in the 1920s

Some years later, in 1926, a new government committee of inquiry was appointed to examine the vagrancy question. The inquiry was also tasked with reviewing the proposals from the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief.

The inquiry again maintained that one problem was that “tattare” most often evaded punishment and the consequences of vagrancy. The previous year's police reform had provided greater opportunities to intervene in accordance with the law.

“More stringent measures to tackle tattare and gypsies were necessary. The way of life, specifically that which a number of tattare have, is a significant danger to society.”<sup>96</sup>

The newly established reform schools for children were specifically highlighted as a successful solution in the ambition to “civilise tattare children”, who were considered to be “a material that is difficult to shape”. Of particular significance was that, thanks to the newly passed Child Welfare Act, there was now substantially greater potential to intervene in relation to children of “the tattare”. Just as important was that the municipality in which the

<sup>94</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1924), Sociala meddelanden [Health and welfare communication] 1924:4, page 367.

<sup>95</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1924), Health and welfare communication 1924:5, page 376.

<sup>96</sup> SOU 1926:9, Official report with proposals for an act on the treatment of certain of those unwilling to work and a danger to society and other statutes, page 98.

children were staying could demand compensation from the municipality where the children were domiciled or from the state. The commission of inquiry believed that this would make the poor relief boards more likely to intervene in relation to “tattare children” from other places. That so much attention was focused on children is explained by these educational measures having had “much greater prospects of being crowned with success than coercive measures against the parents”. The Committee's other proposals for systematic measures were judged to be far too costly.<sup>97</sup>

“Should tattare and gypsies, who at a tender age are taken into care in accordance with the Child Welfare Act, be able to obtain, for a number of years, an upbringing in children's homes intended specifically for tattare and gypsies, a significant step would be taken towards this matter's resolution.”<sup>98</sup>

It appears from the following section that interest in formulating negative conceptions about Roma based on surveys and statistical data did not decline after the 1920s. Reports about the need for surveys of Roma were often motivated by an that they constituted a “scourge”, that their children should be taken into care and that the group should be sterilised.

### **2.3 The National Board of Health and Welfare 1942–1944**

At the beginning of the 1930s, the National Inspector of Poor Relief and Child Welfare wrote a letter to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs about the need for measures to deal with “tattare”. The Inspector was of the opinion that:

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<sup>97</sup> SOU 1926:9, Official report with proposals for an act on the treatment of certain of those unwilling to work and a danger to society and other statutes, pages 98–99; cf. SOU 1929:9, Official report with proposals for legislation concerning measures against vagrancy and measures against immoral living of types that are harmful to society, which also includes similar wording.

<sup>98</sup> SOU 1929:9, Official report with proposals for legislation concerning measures against vagrancy and measures against immoral living of types that are harmful to society, page 99.



“thanks to their antisocial way of life, tattare have for centuries been the cause of considerable nuisance to the rest of the population in this country”.<sup>99</sup>

The Inspector maintained that the measures taken thus far had not had any effect on the “scourge” and he therefore enquired as to whether a central or municipal authority could be given the task of “systematically controlling the tattare' lives and intervening against their antisocial tendencies”:

“It [is] desirable if some authority [receive] a specific commission to supervise tattare in all respects. For such supervision, a central register of every tattare in the country would be required. It appears possible to keep the cost of this reasonably low.”<sup>100</sup>

The inspector argued that the municipalities were disregarding their powers and obligations to take action in respect of Roma children. He explained that there was sufficient support in law to intervene against the circumstances in which these children lived, but that the municipalities were not doing so, mainly for financial reasons.

The letter was referred for consideration to the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Board of Education, the National Board of Agriculture and the county administrative boards in Stockholm, Jönköping, Kristianstad, Malmöhus, Halland, Västmanland, Kopparberg, Västernorrland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten. The majority of these public authorities supported the Inspector's request for an inventory. Several of these referral bodies also noted the need for a central register.

Some of their points of view are reproduced below. Västernorrland County Administrative Board underlined the importance of forceful state intervention:

“As both gypsies and tattare may, to a great extent, be regarded as typically antisocial elements with distinctly inferior racial characteristics, it seems that society, in order to protect its own interests, should intervene with force and employ such resources as

<sup>99</sup> Letter from the Inspector to the Head of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 3/12/1934 Proceedings of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council, 25/9/1942, no. 101, page 1, National Archives.

<sup>100</sup> Letter from the Inspector to the Head of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs 3/12/1934 Proceedings of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council, 25/9/1942, no. 101, page 1. National Archives.

may be required to subdue the antisocial tendencies in question as far as possible... For this purpose, a central register of tattare ... would be of great value. Such a register would also constitute a prerequisite for the successful implementation of further legislation regarding control of tattare.”<sup>101</sup>

The County Administrative Board stressed that one of the County's police districts, which had provided an opinion on the letter, did not believe that a central register of the number of “tattare” would be a sufficient measure. Instead, sterilisation of the group was recommended:

“Sterilisation, constituting the only really effective measure, should be used, at least to some extent.”<sup>102</sup>

The National Board of Health and Welfare's response indicated its misgivings as to whether it was even possible to target measures against the group:

“We [are] faced with a specific racial problem where what is, to us, a foreign element of people in terms of temperament, orientation and resultant way of life cannot be united with our race beneficially.”<sup>103</sup>

The National Board of Health and Welfare thus recommended “heredity research”. The background was that the authority was not convinced that the group could ever become a part of society:

“[S]ocial measures that lead to these, to us, foreign racial elements becoming more thoroughly assimilated would be to our benefit in the long term. There was a risk, it would seem, that these, to us, foreign, temperaments would survive in future, outwardly assimilated generations and give rise to a way of life that, from our perspective, is divergent from that of the community as a whole.”<sup>104</sup>

According to the National Board of Health and Welfare, a purely outward “Swedification of the tattare' way of life” did not affect the

<sup>101</sup> 18 June 1935, response from Västernorrland County, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

<sup>102</sup> 18 June 1935, response from Västernorrland County, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

<sup>103</sup> Comment from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs dat. 28 June 1937, p. 2, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Comment from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs dat. 28 June 1937, p. 2, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

deep-lying causes of the differences between “tattare” and “Swedes” in terms of disposition, intelligence and character. Consequently, the National Board of Health and Welfare was of the opinion that sterilisation should be considered

“[in] such cases where those concerned are unable to even fulfil the elementary duties of a father – or mother – such as they appear from a Swedish perspective.”<sup>105</sup>

In Malmöhus County the police, in responding to the letter, produced a catalogue of the number of “tattare” in the county. Vicars, folk school teachers and child welfare boards in Malmö also provided their opinion and description of the problem identified in the letter. The Malmö police collated this information and created a card index containing details concerning 1 500 people, the oldest information being from the 1790s. With this register, the police intended to demonstrate how one single “tattare” from the end of the 18th century had given rise to no less than 600 descendants. The response to the letter also included photographs and a number of police reports, which, according to the police, “confuted” the criminality of “tattare”.<sup>106</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare wrote in 1940:

“The problem of tattare is closely connected to the question of general prophylactic measures against vagrancy and other asociality. It is well known that the proportion of tattare involved in criminality and vagrancy far exceeds their proportion of the general population. Manslaughter, stabbings and other violent crimes by tattare occur quite often ... Measures to socially adapt these individuals are usually fruitless, thus their relationship to other people is largely determined by their family mentality and by the fact that they often lack the psychological prerequisites to adapt to the prevailing moral and behavioural standards. Without exception, they constitute a burden on Swedish society, both biologically and socially.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Comment from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, dat. 28 June 1937, p. 2, proceedings of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

<sup>106</sup> In a comment from Malmöhus County to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, dat. January 1936, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, no. 101, National Archives.

<sup>107</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1940), Health and welfare communication 1940, page 807.

Preventative maternal care and child welfare were established over the course of the 1940s. Consequently, the Riksdag tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare, as the supervisory authority for maternal care and child welfare boards, with drawing up a range of uniform guidelines for maternal care. Worry was expressed in the Board's maternal care handbook that the new social reforms would be misused and lead us down the wrong path. Likewise, the Board was of the opinion that Roma should not have an automatic right to access mothers' assistance.<sup>108</sup>

At the same time, county administrative boards, child welfare boards, poor relief boards, vicars, folk school teachers, museum curators and private individuals made representations to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and the Board in letters and through contacts. They complained about the way of life of "tattare" and "gypsies" and demanded prompt measures to adapt them to society. Many of those involved called attention to the opportunities an inventory of these groups could entail, but also to the problems that such an inventory might present.<sup>109</sup> For example, in a letter to the Board, one researcher maintained that:

"The need for a countrywide register of gypsies and tattare is of course clear ... [This] would facilitate real supervision."<sup>110</sup>

One child welfare board made representations to the Ministry and the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor in a statement concerning the reasons why one particular Roma woman should be sterilised. The reason given for sterilisation was the woman's hereditary character:

"There exist certain antisocial tendencies in this family, difficulties coping with a civilised society bound by the rule of law. The

<sup>108</sup> More information on this appears in the following chapter, Sterilisation and taking children into care.

<sup>109</sup> One letter to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs indicates that a prison guard serving at the prison in Falun had conducted his own inventory of those people he identifies as "tattare", dat. 07/12/1943, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council 25/9/1942, National Archives. Letter from Uddevalla City's social office, 24 December 1942, Letter from Vendel's Child Welfare Board, 23 November 1942; Cf. Sjögren, David (2010), *Den säkra zonen. Motiv, åtgärdsförslag och verksamhet i den särskiljande utbildningspolitiken för inhemska minoriteter 1913–1962* [The safety zone: Motives, suggested measures and activities in the separate education policy targeted at native minorities [in Sweden] 1913–1962], page 150. 150.

<sup>110</sup> Letter to the Assistant Secretary, 16/03/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare's archive, H 10:6, National Archives.

individuals entering this world under such circumstances will not be of benefit to either themselves or others. Even if these children can be placed in good foster homes, improving their environment, so to speak, one would have every reason to fear that their hereditary characteristics are stronger than the environment. This all favours sterilisation being carried out, on condition that [name] consents.”<sup>111</sup>

In Jönköping, which was considered to be home to most Roma in the country, one trustee had investigated conditions in the group, having been instructed to do so by the city's poor relief board. His findings were drawn from police records, parish civil registration offices, school authorities, poor relief boards and individual municipal councillors.<sup>112</sup>

One influential folk school teacher asserted that “tattare” and “gypsies” were appreciably less capable than Swedes. This teacher was a head of the remedial school in Gothenburg, an active writer, a driving force behind the classification of schools and an ancillary expert in several commissions of inquiry. He was also editor of the journal *The Remedial School* and advocated the investigation of the aptitude of “tattare”. He used two methods: investigating and tracing three “tattare families” going back many years, and sending a questionnaire to more than 80 school districts containing questions about the number of “tattare children” in each district and how many of these were in remedial classes. Many of the responses contain information not just about the pupils at the schools, but also their relatives and families. The teacher collated this information in personal files, which he regarded as important in order to develop a picture both of the families' moral and financial standards and of which people were “tattare”.<sup>113</sup>

“As the social registers also provide valuable overviews of the familial relationships in these families, it is possible to use them as a basis for further research into the tattare' commonly muddled genealogy, with particular reference to the perspectives of hereditary biology. A similar

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<sup>111</sup> “Letter from Child Welfare Board ... to the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor”, 23 November 1942, National Board of Health and Welfare's archive, 5th bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>112</sup> Jacobsson, Tor (1943), *Om tatterna i Jönköping. Redogörelse för vissa, på uppdrag av Jönköpings Stads Fattigvårdsstyrelse företagna undersökningar* [On the tattare in Jönköping. Report on these, investigations commissioned by Jönköping City Council's Poor Relief Board], cf. preface.

<sup>113</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1940–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], pages 14–16. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK.

form of genealogical research, used in the context just mentioned, normally reveals sooner or later that the tattare mentality is not a constructed complex of unfavourable qualities that have been loosely attached to certain dubious persons, rather it is actually attributable to the descendants of tattare.”<sup>114</sup>

The above-mentioned folk school teacher and a school principal in Gothenburg came to be influential in the countrywide inventory conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare at the beginning of the 1940s and which included the question of how many Roma there were in, for example, Gothenburg. Following this inventory, these persons continued to maintain a register of Roma in Gothenburg.<sup>115</sup> Pupils enrolled for the remedial class in Gothenburg, following application by a teacher, would also be assessed by the head of the remedial class, who for many years was the same schoolteacher who maintained that low aptitude could be correlated with immoral living, high fertility and expensive broods of children.

Lack of intelligence also made them less suited to bringing up children. This was a financial drain on society, which could be demonstrated with the help of genealogical investigations combined with IQ measurements and various social registers.<sup>116</sup>

A thesis on the origin of Roma from 1944 also asserts that there was a connection between their ethnic affiliation and aptitude:

“The tattare's intellectual equipment lies partly on a different, more primitive plane than that of the settled person. His lack of social sensitivity makes him unreceptive to knowledge and ideas that, from the point of view of normal society, are self-evident to a normally equipped individual. His aptitude lies in his instinct and in his eyes.”<sup>117</sup>

These letters and the general climate of debate played a role in the National Board of Health and Welfare subsequently being

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<sup>114</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2007), Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950 [The right pupil in the right class: School, aptitude and organisation 1910–1950], quotation taken from page 156.

<sup>115</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1940–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], pages 24–25. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK.

<sup>116</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2007), Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950 [The right pupil in the right class: School, aptitude and organisation 1910–1950], quotation taken from page 168.

<sup>117</sup> Etzler, Allan (1944), Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar i Sverige. Historia och språk [The gypsies and their descendants in Sweden. History and language], page 173.

commissioned to conduct a nationwide inventory. In this connection, it may be worth noting that many of those involved in drawing up the letters were influential in a social policy context and that their actions contributed to the perception that Roma were a major social problem. It is in the light of this that the Board's survey of the group may be interpreted.<sup>118</sup> The task was commissioned by the Swedish Government, which through Letters Patent of 25 September 1942 instructed the Board to “execute an inventory of the tattare and gypsies in this country and deliver to His Royal Highness a report on the results thereof.”<sup>119</sup>

The Board set out the aim of the investigation in more detail in a memorandum:

“To conceptualise the extent of the social questions that may arise concerning tattare and gypsies in their capacities as specific elements in the population: the commission cannot be reinterpreted to apply to an inventory of the total number of individuals who, due to their antisociality or their way of life in general, cause trouble for the rest of the population and for society. Whether the tattare' divergent way of life can be traced back to an innate difference in race or culture or is simply the result of factors relating to their social and financial environment is not apparent, but nor can it be denied that one is dealing with a special population group.”<sup>120</sup>

The survey was conducted just over twenty years after the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief had presented its official report. As indicated in the memorandum, the Board understood that this commission would go far beyond simply establishing the number and distribution of these groups.

That same year, 1942, the Riksdag debated a motion containing a request for a special sterilisation law that would only apply to “tattare”. The Riksdag pointed out that the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs was currently working out which measures could be used to more effectively supervise “tattare”.

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<sup>118</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, page 4. National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXO:3, National Archives.

<sup>119</sup> “Regarding the National Board of Health and Welfare's commission to execute an inventory of tattare and gypsies”, National Board of Health and Welfare's archive, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>120</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, page 4, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXO:3, National Archives.

“Following consultation with the Head of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, I am able to confirm that he is considering whether to propose the establishment of a central register that can serve as guidance in the assessment of the question concerning the organisation of social measures with respect to members of the stated population group, who occasion this through their way of life.”<sup>121</sup>

The County Administrative Boards in Stockholm and Värmland were tasked with conducting a trial inventory. The instructions provided to the county administrative boards included a list of 39 persons and 70 local folklore societies that Nordiska museet (the Nordic Museum) proposed should be engaged as informants for the inventories in Stockholm and Värmland. The Board intended to conduct the inventory in the other counties only once the inventories in these counties had been completed and analysed.<sup>122</sup>

### 2.3.1 Racial biology investigations

Contemporary research and the political discourse indicate that there was concern about the quality of the Swedish stock. Consequently, the question of how to define “tattare” and “gypsies” was one which researchers and politicians were at great pains to find scientific support for. In order to establish who “the tattare” and “the gypsies” were, it was considered important to define them.<sup>123</sup> The question of origin was also important in another respect. Origin, many believed, revealed the degree of Swedishness and a person’s chances of adapting to Swedish culture and the Swedish way of life. Biological origin was thus politically significant and measures targeted at groups in society were weighed in relation to those groups’ expected level of adaptation.

The Board was aware of the problem regarding origin; therefore, it engaged the Institute for Racial Biology in order to ascertain

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<sup>121</sup> Proceedings of the First Chamber, no. 4, 1942:5 concerning reduction of what is known as the tattare scourge, cf. Second Chamber, opinion of the legislative committee 1943 no. 41, Appendix 22 Regarding the tattare scourge.

<sup>122</sup> Letter from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the County Administrative Boards in Stockholm and Värmland Counties, dat. 20/09/1943, National Board of Health and Welfare's archive, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. e.g. Bergstrand, Carl-Martin (1942), whose book *Tattarplågan* [The tattare scourge] maintained that “tattare” had some gypsy blood in their veins, but were mainly a product of the mixing of antisocial elements over many centuries, page 7.



whether “in terms of anthropology, tattare really have a character different from that of the Swedish people on average.”<sup>124</sup> The Board considered it necessary to resolve the question of origin before a complete inventory of “tattare” could be undertaken. This question had been placed under the Ministry, which allocated funds to conduct an investigation into origin.<sup>125</sup>

The racial biology investigation was conducted on 66 people who were inmates of prisons and care facilities for alcoholics and had been designated “tattare” by these facilities. The investigation was also carried out on people who applied for poor relief and had been identified as belonging to one of these groups. The Board's commission contained the following instruction:

“The same investigatory methods should be used to confirm racial character as have been used in the past in the Institute of Racial Biology's study of Swedish conscripts.”<sup>126</sup>

Accordingly, the Institute used the methods developed for and applied to an earlier investigation of 57 263 conscripts in Sweden between 1922 and 1924. In addition to cephalic index, a number of other body measurements were taken. Hair and eye colour were also recorded.<sup>127</sup> The results of the previous investigation were compared with the racial biology investigation carried out in 1943.<sup>128</sup>

The Institute of Racial Biology's report on the investigation stated that many people had initially refused to take part in the study. However, several agreed to participate, having been

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<sup>124</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944), *Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt* [Investigation concerning tattare's character from the perspective of race], page 2. National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H 10 volume 6, National Archives.

<sup>125</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's petition to the King concerning appropriations for anthropological investigation of tattare etc., Stockholm 3 July 1943. National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H 10 volume 6, National Archives.

<sup>126</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies” National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXO:3: 3 RA.

<sup>127</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1926), “The racial characters of the Swedish nation” *Anthropologia suecica*.

<sup>128</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944) *Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt* [Investigation concerning the racial character of tattare], National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H 10 volume 6, National Archives.

convinced that it was a question of “a purely scientific study that does not involve any inconvenience whatsoever.”<sup>129</sup>

One of the report's conclusions was that the head sizes of “tattare” were significantly smaller than Swedish conscripts. Their faces were significantly shorter, their noses wider and shorter. Their physique was shorter and thinner and their hair and eye colour darker than that of Swedish conscripts. The Institute of Racial Biology's conclusion was, however, that the differences were so small that they did not deviate from what was considered “normal” and that the measurements taken from “tattare” in the investigation could be normal for Swedes. However, this relationship did not mean that the Institute was averse to formulating speculative statements about the criminality of “gypsies” and “tattare”.

“The criminality that is characteristic of gypsies is, according to more recent studies, otherwise about as extensive as one generally imagines. It is probable that criminality among tattare is far greater.”<sup>130</sup>

The report stated that no anthropological investigations of “gypsies” had been conducted in Sweden. Instead, it presented a synthesis of investigations from other countries:

“Their height is on average more than 10 cm less than that of the average Swede. In contrast to tattare, however, gypsies do not have a particularly small shoulder width, the proportion of which to height is almost as large as that of Swedes. Furthermore, their craniums are somewhat shorter than those of Swedes, while their faces are about as long. The shape of their noses is very often convex or straight, while concave noses are, however, relatively rare. Their pigmentation is strongly developed, which is already apparent in their skin colour. The majority have brown eyes and dark hair, with a not insignificant number having jet-black hair.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944) Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt [Investigation concerning the racial character of tattare], National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H 10 volume 6, National Archives.

<sup>130</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944) Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt [Investigation concerning the racial character of tattare], National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H Volume 6, National Archives.

<sup>131</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944) Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt [Investigation concerning the racial character of tattare], National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H Volume 6, National Archives.

The report also maintains that “gypsies” were not just different from Swedes or “tattare” with regard to their appearance, but also in terms of their clothing and way of life.

“Gypsies are known for their peculiar way of life. They differ in particular with regard to their clothing, language, etc.”<sup>132</sup>

### 2.3.2 Surveys

The National Board of Health and Welfare was of the opinion that “tattare” and “gypsies” should be inventoried separately and that the inventories should take place at different times. The inventory of “tattare” thus took place prior to the inventory of “gypsies”. The Board justified this position as being consistent with the groups' own wishes:

“This appears to be recommendable for psychological reasons as tattare and gypsies do not wish to be identified with one another”<sup>133</sup>

The Board also believed that an inventory of the number of “tattare” in the country was a much tougher and more complicated task than the inventory of “gypsies”. The reasons given were that “gypsies” were regarded as easier to differentiate from the general population and that they themselves could more readily confirm their ethnic affiliation. Therefore, the Board believed the county administrative boards should be given the task of asking the country's police authorities to call on “gypsies” in their area on a certain day in order to respond to the Board's questionnaire.

“With regard to gypsies, a simpler method may be used [than that used for “tattare”], as they themselves can be expected in most cases to acknowledge their distinctiveness. The inventory of gypsies may therefore take place by means of requesting the county administrative boards to have the police authorities call on gypsies living in the area and ask for the requested data.”<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> Institute of Racial Biology (1944) Utredning rörande tattarens beskaffenhet ur rassynpunkt [Investigation concerning the racial character of tattare], National Board of Health and Welfare, Bureau 5, H Volume 6, National Archives.

<sup>133</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, page 5, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>134</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, page 6, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

The Board was aware that the survey could be perceived as ominous. Consequently, the instructions for the questionnaire stress the following:

“When the data is being gathered, it may be appropriate to stress to those concerned that the inventory has not been set in motion in order to take any special coercive measures against the gypsy population, rather its aim is to survey the conditions in which gypsies live.”<sup>135</sup>

The Board's opinion was that one condition for the implementation of the nationwide inventory was that it be carried out on a specific date, 31 May 1943.

The Board believed that an inventory of “tattare” required a different approach to that of an inventory of “gypsies”. A first stage would involve the country administrative board instructing the police to obtain data from the census and national population register for these individuals. The police would then turn to “persons familiar with local tradition”, who would be able to confirm which people in the area were identified as “tattare”. In addition, a specific list would be drawn up of the “tattare” who previously lived in the area but had now moved away. The Board hoped this method would help it to identify “tattare families” who had moved from the countryside to the towns.<sup>136</sup> According to the questionnaire instructions, it would mainly be those listed as “tattare” in the parish records who would be reported.

Priests were an obvious choice of informant as they were responsible for the parish records. After that, people not listed in the parish records, but who, according to “reliable testimony” were considered “tattare”, were included. The Board therefore asked the police districts to use teachers and representatives of municipal authorities such as the poor relief and child welfare services as informants, in addition to priests.<sup>137</sup>

It appears that the Board's questionnaire concerning “tattare” differed in several respects from that of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief.

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<sup>135</sup> National Board of Health and Social Welfare, Bureau of Inquiry, “Instructions for the questionnaire concerning gypsies, 21/04/1943”, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>136</sup> “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, page 6, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>137</sup> “Information for the inventory of tattare”, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

Many questions in the questionnaire focused on the person providing the information and on what they based this information. A key aspect of the investigation thus involved attempting to establish what could be used to determine who would be designated a “tattare”. In the instructions, the Board noted that “conscientious and socially competent families and persons should [also] be reported, provided that they were regarded as belonging to a tattare family”.<sup>138</sup>

### **2.3.3 The National Board of Health and Welfare's perception of “tattare” and “gypsies”**

What and who did the National Board of Health and Welfare have in mind when information and opinions on “tattare” and “gypsies” were requested in the questionnaire? As with the questionnaire drawn up by the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, the Board's questionnaire did not start from a neutral conception of the groups that were made the subjects of these inventories.

Also relevant here is the fact that the Board gave prominence to a negative view of Roma in many other contexts. Roma were believed to constitute a group that was presumed to differ from a tacit “Swedish” norm. Among other things, the Board's attitude was that Roma should be treated differently and not have access to general welfare reforms such as mothers' assistance. One possible interpretation is that the Board was using the questionnaire in order to get other public bodies to both identify and confirm these notions about “tattare” and “gypsies”.

### **2.3.4 Responses from the counties**

A review of the responses from the counties shows that they contain detailed information about how people were connected to one another through familial and other personal relationships. Recurring details about those concerned are: “tattare”, “not

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<sup>138</sup> “Instructions for the questionnaire concerning tattare” 19/04/1944, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

tattare”, “tattare(?)”, “tattare ½”, “tattare ¼”, “tattare ¾”, “wife of [name]”, “has been the wife of [name]”, “married to [name]”, “husband of [name]”, “betrothed to [name]”, “lives with [name]”, “son-in-law of [name]”, “child of [name]”, “child from a previous marriage to [name]”, “foster child of [name]”, “illegitimate child of [name]”, “illegitimate child [name]”, “father unknown”, “illegitimate child to no. 2 father unknown”, “child adopted by the fisherman [name]”, “parents unknown”, “betrothal child of [name]”, etc. The responses also contain value-based assessments of appearance, living habits and character. In addition, there is information indicating that many of the families exposed to the inventory had been subject to social interventions such as their children being taken into care and sterilisation.

Responses from one of the counties are reproduced below, providing a general picture of the type of information found in the inventory. The inventory in this county was based on 43 people. Four alternatives in support of a person being defined as a “tattare” were listed on the questionnaire:

1) According to a customary interpretation in the area?

This question has been answered yes in 39 cases and no in one case. Some examples: “Yes, half-tattare. The wife is said to be of wholly tattare heritage”, “According to the normal interpretation is not a tattare, however his wife. However, certain characteristics bring to mind tattare”, “Yes, but only half tattare. The father is Swedish”.

2) Because of appearance or racial features that differ from the rest of the local population?

This question has been answered yes in 23 cases by this county and no in ten cases. Some examples of the statements: “Yes, appearance, but reliable in terms of their way of life.” “Possibly in terms of appearance, but known for their good conduct and trustworthiness in business, reliable in terms of their way of life.” “Yes, typical tattare appearance” and “Does not have the appearance of a tattare”. “The children's appearance does not remind one of tattare The racial traits appear later as they grow.

They have shown themselves to be well behaved during their schooling.” “Not appearance, but character traits.”

3) Because of the family members' way of life?

The responses were 12 yeses and 11 nos. Some of the statements: “No, very conscientious and reliable”, “Yes, prefers to do business in markets and festival sites with sundry items”, “Yes, is a horse-dealer and trades in scrap and the like”, “Leads a wandering life” and “Yes, the sons are wanderers”.

4) For other reasons and if so what are they?

This question was answered with three nos and a number of statements and remarks: “Because the person concerned has many dealings with wandering tattare and knows much about their familial relationships”, “seeks out the company of tattare and also gypsies when the opportunity presents itself”, “is married to a tattare and is often in the company of such people”, “according to what I've heard, the wife [name] and father could be tattare”. “Many years ago, the wife [name] went around the area and 'traded' in various textiles. Now the couple have a small draper's shop in [town]”.

The inventory also involved asking whether any of those concerned led a vagabond way of life. At this point the inventory in the county in question is also representative, showing a large surplus of negative responses, with the following comment: “To some extent can thus be regarded, as the family, particularly in the summer, travels around from place to place, dealing in scrap and horses and possibly illegal peddling.” On the whole it may be concluded that many of the people in the inventory were listed as being able to support themselves.

In his thesis *Den säkra zonen* [The safety zone], about Swedish education policy directed at “tattare”, “gypsies” and nomadic “lapps” from 1913 to 1962, the historian David Sjögren has compiled a list of who submitted information and the reasons they

gave for identifying someone as a “tattare”.<sup>139</sup> Sjögren's synthesis shows that the vast majority, as high as 90 per cent of responses, identified “tattare” based on local customs. This reason was often combined with assessments about their appearance, racial traits and way of life. Those providing such reports were police officers and/or priests. In close to a third of the responses the social services had helped the police and in one fifth the police had sought help from people who did not represent the social services. Sjögren's review indicates that the police and priests were less likely to have assessed “tattare” based on their way of life, “divergent” appearance or racial traits than representatives of the social services or other informants.<sup>140</sup>

### 2.3.5 The National Board of Health and Welfare's report

On Monday 31 May 1943 the country's police travelled to the camps where Roma lived and asked questions based on the questionnaire drawn up by the National Board of Health and Welfare. The Board's report on “the number and way of life of gypsies” indicates that the number of people identified by the police as “gypsies” was around 500.

The Board used tables to report the locations of Roma in the country at the time of the inventory, how they were distributed in terms of gender, the number of adults and children under 15, respectively, and whether they were itinerant or settled. In addition, the Board drew up a table showing how many of the adults were married, unmarried or had previously been married. The Board also reported the number of Roma who were married or cohabiting with people who were “non-gypsies” and were, as a result of a “racial mix”, “half or quarter gypsy”.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, the

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<sup>139</sup> Sjögren, David (2010), Den säkra zonen. Motiv, åtgärdsförslag och verksamhet i den särskiljande utbildningspolitiken för inhemska minoriteter 1913-1962 [The safety zone: Motives, suggested measures and activities in the separative education policy targeted at native minorities [in Sweden] 1913-1962], pages 168-169.

<sup>140</sup> Sjögren, David (2010), Den säkra zonen. Motiv, åtgärdsförslag och verksamhet i den särskiljande utbildningspolitiken för inhemska minoriteter 1913-1961 [The safety zone: Motives, suggested measures and activities in the separative education policy targeted at native minorities [in Sweden] 1913-1962], page 169.

<sup>141</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1944), Health and welfare communication 1944, no. 2, page 124.



Board described how these people supported themselves, their religious affiliation and schooling. Twenty-three of the 500 people identified were settled, the majority of whom were minors who had been taken into the care of institutions or foster parents. The Board concluded that “gypsies' itinerant way of life” affected their children's schooling, which was the reason why many were illiterate.<sup>142</sup>

The Institute of Racial Biology's investigation and one researcher's theories about “gypsies” and “tattare” are compared with one another in the Board's report on “the number and way of life of gypsies”. The report maintains that only one of the “tattare” included in the Institute's racial investigation could be considered a “tattare” under the researcher's definition. A couple of others could have been regarded as being related to a similar “typical tattare character”. Consequently, the researcher's definition was too narrow for the inventory, while the Institute had not provided any definition at all.<sup>143</sup> The Board still managed to arrive at a definition of “tattare”:

“Tattare ... are a specific population group, less distinctive and primitive in terms of their way of life than gypsies but reminiscent of this group through their predilection for a vagabond way of life and also according to a fairly widespread popular perception concerning their appearance.”<sup>144</sup>

The Board concluded that the inventory indicated that “the tattare population” amounted to approximately 8 000 people.<sup>145</sup> Since the inventory of 1923, the number of “tattare” had increased about five times over. The Board's explanation for this was that the investigation of 1923 had been summary and in some respects carelessly conducted, while the present inventory was comprehensive.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1944), Health and welfare communication 1944, no. 2, page 127.

<sup>143</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1945), Health and welfare communication 1945, page 379.

<sup>144</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1944), Health and welfare communication 1944, page 377.

<sup>145</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1945), Health and welfare communication 1945, page 380.

<sup>146</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1945), Health and welfare communication 1945, page 381.

The Board compiled detailed tables based on the responses, showing the where in the country “tattare” had been identified. In addition, it drew up tables that reported where people were at the time of the inventory and their place of birth. The aim was to chart their mobility. Tables were also created featuring their age, occupation, household composition in terms of size and whether the people in question were single or married and how many in the household were children or relatives. The Board's report also lists how many children were in the care of the child welfare authorities, the number of people who were imprisoned, the number of people who were inmates in care facilities for alcoholics and how many were being treated for mental illnesses.<sup>147</sup>

In its report to the Government in 1945, the Board emphasised that the opinions it had previously expressed to the Government had been reinforced by the newly completed inventory. However, the Board sought an additional inquiry “concerning measures that aim to combat this population group's lack of adjustment to society and the resultant social problems”:

“Consideration should be given to undertaking such measures as may be relevant in order to do away with the lack of adjustment to society by this population group. The inquiry now submitted confirms that there is great need for such consideration. Although it may be considered established that one cannot envisage measures that regard tattare as an anthropologically separate population group, on the other hand, this inquiry gives good reason for making this group, which is a distinct one from a social and other perspectives., the subject of measures within the scope of general legislation.”<sup>148</sup>

Following this inventory, the state's interest in registering “tattare” declined. One effect of the comprehensive measures targeting the group was that many Travellers hid their affiliation to the Traveller culture in order to avoid abusive treatment. It would appear, however, that interest in survey itself was undiminished, but now was entirely focused on the group the public authorities defined as “gypsies”.

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<sup>147</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1945), Health and welfare communication 1945, 8 tables containing this information were presented in this 16-page communication.

<sup>148</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1945), Health and welfare communication 1945, page 392.

### 2.3.6 Examples of how the material was distributed in the 1940s

The National Board of Health and Welfare's documents indicate that it loaned out the results of the inventories and in other cases helped other interested parties to trace persons included in the inventories.<sup>149</sup> For example, following a request in July 1944, the County Administrative Board in Gothenburg and Bohus County received information about a named individual and her parents “that had been sent to the Board by the police superintendent in [name] during the gypsy investigation of 31 May 1943”. On 23 May 1946 a request was received from the County Administrative Board in Gothenburg and Bohus County; the National Board of Health and Welfare complied with this by sending copies of the “information concerning a named individual that had been collected during the gypsy inventory of 31 May 1943 by the police superintendent in [name]”. This time, the Board attached “the observation that the information in question is protected in accordance with Section 16 of the Act concerning Restrictions on the Right to Access Public Documents of 29 May 1937”. Another document reveals that the Board received an offer of a loan of “the material concerning tattare found in the West of Sweden Folklore Archive.” At the same time, the Board sent a “list of the information about tattare households obtained in the Board's trial investigation of Värmland County”. A further example is a request from Lund General Hospital in November 1943 for information about where a named patient and her husband are registered for census purposes. The Board replies with “copies of certain information provided to the Board's inventory of gypsies”.

On 1 October 1946, the Board's bureau of inquiry writes to the Institute of Racial Biology to request confirmation “of the receipt of the statistical data concerning gypsies and tattare loaned to the Institute by the Board. You are also reminded of the confidential nature of this material pursuant to law.” There are two handwritten notes on the document; “Material returned 5/8/48” and “lent again”.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

<sup>150</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

## 2.4 The Gypsy Inquiry 1954–1955

Ten years would pass before the police authorities were given the task of conducting a new inventory of Roma in Sweden. The inventory was carried out within the scope of the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954, the official report of which in many respects came to adopt a different attitude to Roma than the Board had done in connection with the inventories of the 1940s.

The question of an inquiry had been raised in the Riksdag in 1953 in one question and two motions. What was common to these initiatives in the Riksdag was that they emphasised that the conditions of Roma were affected by society's discrimination and negative attitudes towards Roma as a group.<sup>151</sup> The Riksdag requested that His Royal Majesty carry out an inquiry concerning “the measures that should be employed to adapt gypsies to a normal social life.”<sup>152</sup>

The official report of the Gypsy Inquiry came to emphasise society's responsibility for the poor conditions under which Roma lived. The Inquiry concluded that hate and prejudice had guided and impacted on public authorities' decision-making:

“There are countless example of cases where gypsies have been treated badly by both individuals and public authorities. They have been persecuted and driven away from workplaces, refused entry to shops and restaurants and their existence has been made more difficult in other ways. Finding places to set up camp is still the travelling gypsies' greatest problem. Where the hire of campsites has not been directly prevented, it has mainly been granted only for very short periods. Perhaps the most troublesome expression of society's attitude to gypsies, however, has been the treatment of them by certain municipalities, which have refused to arrange fixed accommodation”.<sup>153</sup>

The Inquiry established that the housing conditions of Roma had serious repercussions on their living conditions in general and locked many of them into a negative spiral of poor health, impaired opportunities to acquire a reasonable income, failure to receive

<sup>151</sup> Motion in the Second Chamber 1953 no. 82 by Gerda Nilsson (Communist Party), identical to the motion in the Second Chamber, motion in the First Chamber 1953 no. 196 by Erik August Lindblom (Liberal Party) and Gustav Valfrid Sundelin (Liberal Party).

<sup>152</sup> Riksdag Communication 1953, no. 374.

<sup>153</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 12.

social benefits as a result of not being on the national register and extensive illiteracy. Moreover, the Inquiry was of the opinion that Roma were subjected to extensive persecution in all aspects of community life.<sup>154</sup>

### 2.4.1 The survey's aims and participants

The working practices that had guided the efforts of both the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief and the National Board of Health and Welfare were, however, adopted by the Gypsy Inquiry. The Inquiry undertook various types of survey in order to gain a picture of “what barriers currently stand in the way of gypsies' permanent settlement and whether specific measures are required from the public sector to facilitate this.”<sup>155</sup>

The Gypsy Inquiry submitted the question of whether an inventory would be conducted to the Head of the Royal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, who had ministerial status. The Inquiry believed that a full investigation was called for and should be implemented in two stages. First, an inventory would be conducted by the police in every district on a certain day during the winter of 1954–1955. This would provide the Commission of Inquiry with information about names, familial affiliation, age, marriage rate, fertility, mortality, etc. Furthermore, the Inquiry thought that Roma literacy and their housing and labour conditions needed to be surveyed. It was also vital to survey Roma travelling habits, as well as their economic standards and hygiene. Following this, a special expert, “someone intimate with gypsies' circumstances”, would “visit gypsies to collect further information”.<sup>156</sup>

The Commission of Inquiry specified in an internal memo which persons would be subject to the inventory, as well as its content, design and organisation. The subjects of the inventory were “all gypsies in the country, both full gypsies and gypsies of

<sup>154</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question].

<sup>155</sup> Directive to the inquiry, reproduced in SOU 1956:43, pages 7–8.

<sup>156</sup> Memorandum to the Minister and Head of the Royal Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Gunnar Sträng, dat. 21 October 1954, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives; cf. minutes of a meeting of the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954, 2 November 1954, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.

mixed race, not only those who are itinerant but also those of fixed abode”.<sup>157</sup>

“Itinerant” Roma were understood to be easy to identify as their appearance and living habits were regarded as making them distinct from the rest of the population. The memo stresses that the inventory would also encompass people who were not born as Roma but lived together with Roma due to marriage or some other reason. Settled Roma would be registered, which the Commission believed to be associated with certain difficulties:

“Gypsies do not always hide behind their gypsy name; often they also have names that strongly suggest the purely Swedish. Despite gypsies' much-talked-of sense of family, it may also be the case that a gypsy tries to hide his or her gypsy affiliation.”<sup>158</sup>

The inventory was not just designed to survey the number of Roma who lived in tents and how they were distributed across the country; it was just as important to record their familial relationships, with the aim of, for example, learning about the number of Roma who were settled.

“Such information should be collected during the inventory as it can help trace settled gypsies. Every gypsy found can, quite simply, be asked about their knowledge of their kin.”<sup>159</sup>

In order to achieve a reliable result, the police would

“search the entire country for gypsies with a 'fine-tooth comb' on a certain day.”<sup>160</sup>

The Inquiry drew up an information form and instruction for the country administrative boards and police authorities.<sup>161</sup> The

<sup>157</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Memorandum regarding a new inventory of gypsies”, page 3, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>158</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Memorandum regarding a new inventory of gypsies”, page 4, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>159</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Memorandum regarding a new inventory of gypsies”, page 5, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>160</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Memorandum regarding a new inventory of gypsies”, page 5, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>161</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Instructions” and “Information for the gypsy inventory of 1954” “Bureau communications to all county administrative boards regarding the inventory of gypsies in the country” 18/11/1954, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives. Cf. SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan. Betänkande avgivet av 1954 års Zigenarutredning [The gypsy question. Official report published by the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954], page 9.

Commission's instructions to the county administrative boards also explained that the inventory should be complemented by an expert who would conduct an "intensive investigation". The instructions also contained a request from the Inquiry that the police keep an eye on Roma and report on their movements in the period from 10 December 1954 to spring 1955. The police in the place to which the Roma person moved were to inform the Inquiry about this.<sup>162</sup>

Guided by these forms and instructions, Sweden's police authorities carried out the inventory on 10 December 1954. By means of the inventory, the Gypsy Inquiry acquired a register of what Roma persons in the country were called, the size of the Roma group, where Roma stayed, how they were distributed across the country and their housing conditions. The register also contained information on the number of women and men, how old they were and how the ages were distributed in the group, their marital status, familial relationships, employment and whether they could read or write.<sup>163</sup>

The responses from the country's police authorities were compiled by the Commission and came to form a register of the country's Roma. Shortly after it was drawn up, this register was sent by the Commission to the Prison Service, which wanted to find out if these people had criminal records.<sup>164</sup> The register was also sent to the National Aliens Commission to check whether the Roma listed in it were Swedish citizens.<sup>165</sup>

The Pensions Board was given the chance to review the register in order to provide information on whether the people in question were receiving state pensions.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Bureau communications to all county administrative boards regarding the inventory of gypsies in the country" 18/11/1954, YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>163</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Information for the gypsy inventory of 1954" YK 1506, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>164</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Memorandum to the Royal Prison Service" 31/01/1956, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>165</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Memorandum to the National Aliens Commission" 31/01/1956, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>166</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Memorandum to the Royal Pensions Board" 31/01/1956, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.

In addition, an expert, charged with checking the accuracy of the information in the register collected by the police authorities, visited the camps to acquire further, complementary data.

The expert, in a memo to the Commission, stressed immediately prior to his survey that the inventories already conducted had made “the gypsies a little suspicious of what is going on”. Neutralising this suspicion was of the utmost importance if the work of the Inquiry was not to be obstructed. The expert was doubtful about allowing Roma to appear on the radio to describe their situation and argued that they should not be allowed a voice:

“However, under no circumstances should this contribution [Roma getting to describe their own points of view] be a main feature of the programme ... I would myself like to speak in any future programme.”<sup>167</sup>

The opinion that Roma from Finland should be expelled from the country is expressed in this memo.

“The Finnish gypsies' infiltration does not bode well. However, it appears obvious to me that these people should be returned to their homeland. Those in authority should make a decision on this as soon as possible. It may be true that Finnish gypsies are not acknowledged as the equals of the Swedish, but the lack of marriage candidates is now so great among the gypsies in our country that they are sure to take whatever they can. If it becomes the fashion to marry a man or woman from Finland, the gypsy question will not be resolved in our generation. Cannot some form of “vagrancy act” be applied to these foreign gypsy guests.”<sup>168</sup>

It may be concluded that the opinions expressed by the expert in this memo did not constitute a barrier to his chances of conducting an “intensive investigation”.

The Commission drew up a memorandum to serve as an interview guide in order to identify relevant lines of questioning for the expert's “intensive investigation”. According to the interview guide, the expert would establish such things as whether there had been any changes to the number of people in the household since

<sup>167</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Letter to Administrative Officer Olof Särnmark” 17/10/1954, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>168</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Letter to Administrative Officer Olof Särnmark” 17/10/1954, page 2, YK 1506, Volume 1, National Archives.



10 December 1954. Furthermore, the Commission wanted to have more complete information about familial relationships, religious affiliation, education, economic circumstances, musical and artistic abilities, knowledge of needlework and engineering, social benefits, housing conditions, the past year's campsites and migration routes, as well as "the gypsies'" own opinions about what they themselves regarded as being treated well or badly and whether they blamed themselves at all for their living conditions. The expert would also try to gain the police authority's assessment of the camp, or that of another municipal body.<sup>169</sup>

### 2.4.2 Intensive investigation

Every campsite and home registered by the police authorities was visited by the expert. In line with his commission, he asked questions concerning individuals' living conditions and familial relationships. The expert stepped into homes where the residents were observed and assessed and made these persons objects of review and evaluation. Each individual was assigned a Z-number in the intensive investigation and each family was given a Z-family-number that followed these people in the central and local government sectors' work over many years.<sup>170</sup> The intensive investigation thus allowed the Commission to acquire information not only about familial relationships in campsites or homes, but also about who was otherwise related to whom. This type of information was subsequently used by representatives of the public authorities as a basis for drawing up Roma family trees. The expert's statements about each individual, family, familial relationship etc also had the character of a manual describing what aspects and assessments should stand out and what was amplified and made the main point. Some examples follow of how Roma

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<sup>169</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "Memorandum for interviews as part of the Gypsy Inquiry intensive investigation spring 1954", YK 1505, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>170</sup> The expert investigator continued the registration under the auspices of the National Employment Board and there is a register for the years 1947–1962 containing information on individuals, relatives – including family trees – and photographs. The register was also later used routinely by Stockholm Municipality and the National Board of Health and Welfare.

were described, assessed and categorised in the investigation, apparently without influencing the verdicts of the investigator:

“[He] appears kind and decent, as does his entire family. The older children do not really look that intelligent. [His daughter] is fat and vulgar.”

“However, the residents of this encampment cannot be said to be overly intelligent. They belong to a sort of underclass among the gypsies, who cannot think further than their nose.”

“They appear bright and sensible, but one cannot say they appear to be especially intelligent.”

“[He] makes a particularly likable impression. He speaks wisely and judiciously. He is completely sympathetic to the idea that gypsies in general should be assimilated and forced to attend school. ... He is without doubt an unusually gifted chap, and in that sense reminds me a lot of his cousin.”

“[He] makes a very trustworthy impression. He is probably not hugely gifted, but nor is he a fool.”

“[He] is very charming. His voice is soft and lilting.”

“[This family] is one of the most troublesome in the country. ... It is highly likely that they will be hard to integrate into society.”

“[This family] are still very much gypsies in terms of their way of life. They eat gypsy food, their women dress as gypsies, their attitude to society is that of the nomad.”

“[She] appears simple, but kind.”

“She looks genial and decent, but without betraying much intelligence.”

“[He] is the largest gypsy I have seen. He could be mistaken for a Swede as his skin is not particularly dark.”

“The family give the impression of being poor and somewhat backward.”

“She is black as night.”

Each campsite, home and caravan that the expert visited was described carefully in terms of its size, furnishings and other items

found there. The investigation reveals that the Roma who were surveyed as part of the intensive investigation lived in an extremely difficult economic situation and were subjected to discrimination. These circumstances appear primarily when the expert provides quotations from Roma:<sup>171</sup>

“I have no urge to travel. No, gypsies must live, that's why they travel. Now that I have my [home] here, I don't need to travel any more. But gypsies in general are not accepted as proper people. They only keep moving because they're forced away. If only people would think about that. We're all human. No-one can say who is better.”

“Go to hell, gypsy devil! they scream at us. Do we get child benefit? No, we don't. They cross us off the books. May we work? You can't do anything, you damned gypsy swine! they say. Haven't I fulfilled all my obligations? But can I go into a café in town and get a coffee? No, because the Swedes curse. We still have to get by. What does the government do for us? Nothing. Sends the police after us.”

“Why do we travel? We have to live. The early bird catches the worm. That's what our work is like. You know yourself. We don't get jobs like the rest. We lack the knowledge. They think we're up to no good. They don't want us. That's how it is. We wander about to make a living.”

“They can't stand us. We do nothing to them, but they're still rude and scold us. It's hard to find sites. We may beg and plead for ages before we're allowed to rent a piece of land for a week. I can't read and write, as you probably know, but I'd like to have been able to. These skills aren't hard to get. They'd benefit me and my children.”

“We're tired of moving. We earn nothing. Travelling isn't worth the trouble. Is it right for a 60-year-old man to live in a Masonite caravan? Cold and awful. Expensive and wretched. The amount of firewood we go through! No matter how much we keep the fire going, it's still cold, damp and brutal. You don't feel like a human being during winter. Also, how expensive is it to move a caravan? How easily do we drive them into the ground? It sits out in all weathers, how long does it keep out the rain? After a few years, you have to get the wallet out to fix it. After another couple of years, it's worn out. And what does it cost for a new one? They see, my dear fellow, that our home is not cheap. It is bad, and expensive. So who wouldn't want to live in a flat? With a roof over our heads, we'd give up begging and pleading. We wouldn't have to end up in crazy, out-of-the-way spots where we

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<sup>171</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, YK 1506, Volume 8, National Archives.

don't earn a penny. If we were able to look for permanent work ... I wouldn't say no to a flat. It can't be more expensive than a caravan. But it would be better.”

“We also want to be human beings. We also want to get on, and not always have to think about the road and campsites. We aren't stupid. No one can say that gypsies are more thick-headed than Swedes. We want to be treated like human beings and if we can settle permanently and support ourselves like the rest, then that's what will happen.”

“Rats are also a scourge, and there are rats as big as cats.”

“Of course the treatment of gypsies could be better. We're not recognised as proper Swedes. We have to listen as they call us names. We have a hard time finding a place, being allowed into pubs and it's really difficult to get a place where we can register for the census.”

Several statements echo the expert's opinion that Roma have not always done all they can to keep their tent, home or caravan in a good state of repair. Here are some examples of statements indicating that the poor living conditions themselves – the visible signs that could be taken to indicate poverty and destitution – were linked to the perception that Roma did not make enough of an effort:

“The caravan appears shabby and worse for wear. The lack of paint makes it pretty forbidding.”

“[Name] lives in caravans of about the same size as [a relative's caravan], but they are not as nicely decorated. Otherwise, they are decorated in the usual gypsy way.”

“I have not visited the family, but my chauffeur, who knows the family quite well and has visited the home several times, regarded it as pretty untidy and neglected. There were also a whole load of tattare-like elements going about the place.”

“[Name] caravan is shabby and untidy, otherwise a certain order and tidiness prevails.”

“The home is neglected and shabby.”

In line with its mandate, the investigation produced information about who was defined as “gypsy”, “half-gypsy” and people not

born as Roma but who lived with Roma. The latter category also had space devoted to it in the investigation.

“The women are dressed as gypsy women usually are, even [name], despite the fact that she is Swedish. [Name] speaks Romani, she tells fortunes in the manner of gypsy women and she has taken on gypsy customs in all respects. I have previously discussed her life with her and she has assured me that she has lived happily with her husband. She does not regret her marriage; the gypsies have been kind to her.”

“The husband has never regretted marrying a gypsy woman.”

### 2.4.3 How many?

As with the inventories carried out by the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief and the National Board of Health and Welfare, the Gypsy Inquiry's survey aimed to establish the number of Roma in the country.

The Inquiry arrived at the figure of 740 “gypsies”, 372 of whom were men and 368 women. Of these, 560 were defined as “full gypsies”, while the rest were considered children of “gypsies” and “non-gypsies”. The inventories also indicated, the Inquiry went on, that there were 55 Swedes living together with Roma. They were not included in the total figure of 740.<sup>172</sup>

“Concerning who are to be regarded as gypsies ... the Inquiry finds that no doubts should remain, since there is now a very accurate list, produced as part of the investigation, of all full gypsies and mixed-race gypsies in the country, as well as of the Swedes who live together with gypsies.”<sup>173</sup>

The Commission produced a detailed table of the number of Roma living in different counties and areas, subdivided by men and women, adults and children, and housing conditions. The table was not published in the official report, but is preserved in the archives.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>172</sup> SOU 1956:43 Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 142, Appendix 2.

<sup>173</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 19.

<sup>174</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “Tab. 1. Number of gypsies in different counties and areas, subdivided by men and women, adults and children and housing conditions” YK 1506, Volume 4.

However, the official report contained a quantitative account of the group's problems and condition. Age and marital status of those in the group are shown in tables in the official report. A table was drawn up to show the occupations the people in question had, their schooling and distribution by age, housing conditions and whether they lived in a home, tent or caravan, along with a table indicating what Roma considered was the most necessary measure for the State to take to improve the situation.<sup>175</sup>

#### 2.4.4 The Commission's proposals

The official report concluded that the conditions of Roma were characterised primarily by circumstances over which they themselves had no control. Extensive illiteracy and the resultant difficulties in finding work also affected their chances of gaining access to housing. The Inquiry believed that housing should primarily be arranged within the scope of existing housing development. As it was often difficult to provide suitable homes, the Inquiry proposed using prefabricated wooden houses, among them the type of house used by the National Employment Board as workers' accommodation. The Inquiry also found that the cooperation of municipalities was vital to housing provision. As such cooperation would place a financial burden on municipalities, the Inquiry proposed that the state should assume responsibility for providing the financial assistance Roma could require in conjunction with obtaining a home. The Inquiry made reference to the procedure that had been utilised when providing support to refugees.

The official report contains the perception that the problem with Roma was of a special kind and that “gypsies” were not capable of looking after themselves and making the best of their situation. Consequently, it was proposed that there would be a gypsy advisor, whose role would be to help the group:

“It is of course the case that when society offers the individual support in some respect, it is commonly required that the individual be able to analyse his situation and that he can take certain steps to deal with his support problems and his problems in general. When it comes to

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<sup>175</sup> SOU 1954:43 Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], pages 143–145, Appendix 2.

gypsies, because of their various handicaps, it cannot, unfortunately, be assumed that they have this ability to any great extent.”<sup>176</sup>

## 2.5 The National Employment Board 1962–1965

The Gypsy Inquiry led to the Riksdag deciding in 1958 that the National Employment Board (NEB) would be given responsibility for the measures necessary to “safeguard provision for gypsies and their adjustment to modern society”. However, the NEB, in a communication to the Government, expressed the opinion, given its experience of the municipalities' unresponsive attitude, that Statsverket<sup>177</sup> should cover the costs of dealing with “the gypsy question”. The Riksdag approved the measures recommended by the Minister for Health and Social Affairs, based on the NEB's communication. A Government Communication of 25 March and 10 June 1958 provided instructions on how “the gypsy question” was to be solved.<sup>178</sup>

Measures that would be prioritised were employment for Roma and access to housing. Responsibility for this was divided up between several public authorities. At the national level, the NEB, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Board of Education had responsibility for funding and administration. At the local level, Social Services, the Employment Agency and the local school authorities would ensure that the decisions concerning Roma housing, employment and schooling were implemented. Additional public authorities were involved in adult education and the children's schooling. The Education Department in Stockholm was contacted in order to monitor a newly started adult education programme for Roma in Stockholm. Collaboration between the

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<sup>176</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 74. In 1959, a gypsy advisor was appointed in Stockholm Municipality. At the beginning of the 1960s, “gypsy cases” were an established concept within social services and a specific unit, the Gypsy Section, worked on issues affecting Roma.

<sup>177</sup> Statsverket is an old term for the Swedish State as a financial unit. Most often, this referred specifically to that part of the State's financial activities that were controlled by the Government, but not that part controlled by the Riksdag via the Swedish National Debt Office and the Riksbank, cf. Nationalencyklopedin [The national encyclopaedia], Volume 17 (1995) main entry Statsverket.

<sup>178</sup> Minister for Health and Social Affairs, Torsten Nilsson, cf. Råd och anvisning i Socialvårdsfrågor [Guidance and instructions on social care issues], National Board of Health and Welfare, no. 129, 1960.

NEB's public officials and the Educational Institution led to new tasks in 1964. Later the same year, the Education Department was given a major assignment to investigate the state of Roma children's schooling. The following section describes the surveys that were funded and approved by the NEB.

In 1962 several researchers agreed that they would apply to the NEB for research grants, as the Board was assumed to “be interested in finding out about gypsies' individual prerequisites for rehabilitation”. The researchers believed that it was important to conduct a comprehensive survey of the group:

“A careful sociomedical penetration of gypsies' actual circumstances, find out something about morbidity and mortality, their requirements as regards support from society in various forms et cetera, not least, perhaps, the attempts to adapt them to work. From the geneticists' point of view, blood samples are wanted for more detailed analysis as well as a number of measurements, which would be of interest to their studies.”<sup>179</sup>

The Gypsy Inquiry's (SOU 1956:43) survey was regarded as significant, but more information was needed in order to gain more reliable and thus better statistical data.<sup>180</sup>

The question arrived with a letter to be submitted to the NEB. The letter reported that an assistant professor from the Department of Genetics and a professor from the Department of Social Medicine in Uppsala had drawn up a plan for an investigation of the Swedish “gypsies” in Stockholm. The investigation would involve a historic description of what central and local government authorities had done and were doing to rehabilitate “gypsies”. The investigation would also encompass an anthropological – genetic – demographic study and a sociomedical study to be undertaken by a medical doctor who at the time was working for the Child Welfare Board in Stockholm.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>179</sup> Letter from Professor Ragnar Berfenstam at the Department of Social Medicine to John Takman, dat. 18/05/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7. Letter from John Takman to Professor Ragnar Berfenstam at the Department of Social Medicine, date 28/05/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from John Takman to Professor Ragnar Berfenstam at the Department of Social Medicine in Uppsala, dat. 16/06/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7; “Draft version of the investigation Gypsies in Stockholm” date 19/06/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>181</sup> Letter to Director-General Bertil Olsson, Royal National Employment Board by John Takman, date 19/07/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.



After a number of negotiations with the professor, the NEB decided to commission Uppsala University's Department of Social Medicine to conduct an investigation of Roma in Stockholm in association with the Institute for Medical Genetics at Uppsala University (formerly the National Institute of Racial Biology) and the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. Following the NEB's decision, the investigation would form the basis of "occupational rehabilitation measures" and be conducted in accordance with a plan presented in a memorandum. The investigation would encompass 200 persons.<sup>182</sup> The memorandum put forward the perception that it was difficult to adapt adult Roma to occupations and provide them with work "that suits their peculiar nature and prerequisites." A thorough investigation of Roma's health and other factors was required in order to implement effective vocational education and job acquisition measures for Roma.<sup>183</sup>

*The Department of Social Medicine* would, in line with the plan, conduct a comprehensive sociomedical study of each Roma person in Stockholm. The Department would produce a social and medical case history by studying records from healthcare facilities, social security records, information from school authorities, statements from employers and reform schools, statements from the National Supervision Board's<sup>184</sup> register and statements from the criminal records. Physical status and information about hygiene would also be compiled. This involved routine examinations, ergonomic studies, ECGs and statistical data. Collecting information about mental status was also identified as important. This involved an

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<sup>182</sup> NEB (1962), "Reg. sociomedical investigation of gypsies living in the Stockholm area intended to be the basis of occupational rehabilitation measures" Ref. no. V 599/62, Decision 19/11/1962 City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>183</sup> NEB (1962), "Reg. sociomedical investigation of gypsies living in the Stockholm area intended to be the basis of occupational rehabilitation measures", Appended plan for the decision concerning a sociomedical investigation, "Memorandum regarding a sociomedical-genetic-sociological study of gypsies in the Stockholm area" dat. 04/11/1962, Ref. no. 599/62, Decision 16/11/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>184</sup> The National Supervision Board was a government authority that existed between 1909 and 1970. It was responsible for supervising "the industries subject to excise duty" (those that paid manufacturing and turnover taxes). When the licence booklet system for purchasing alcoholic drinks was introduced in 1919, it became responsible for the application of alcohol legislation, especially the state monopoly on the sale of alcoholic drinks. The authority was merged into the newly created National Tax Board, *Nationalencyklopedin* [The national encyclopaedia] (1995), main entry *Kontrollstyrelsen*.

assessment of basic social attitude, motivation, willingness to cooperate, level of alcohol abuse, etc.

*The Institute for Medical Genetics* would conduct a genetic study. According to the plan, the Institute would perform tests on blood and urine. The Institute would establish eye colour, hair colour, presence of earlobes and hair type, and would also measure cephalic index and handprint and make an assessment of musculature and overall strength.

*The Nordic Museum* would compile information about housing, occupation, income, diet and daily routine, covering the relationship between work, rest and recreation. In addition, the Museum would produce information on hygiene, manners and customs, schooling, reading habits and educational level, cultural contacts and “the gypsies' desires for the future”.<sup>185</sup>

Furthermore, a *social care doctor* would carry out a sociological investigation.<sup>186</sup> The results of the investigation would be reported to the NEB, partly in a statement about each individual person from the Department of Social Medicine in Uppsala, and partly in a generic report from the Department of Social Medicine, the Nordic Museum and the Institute for Medical Genetics.<sup>187</sup>

### 2.5.1 The Gypsy Investigation in Stockholm 1962–1963

The researchers wrote a summary report for the NEB about how their work on the investigation of Roma in Stockholm had been conducted. They began by stressing that while the NEB was interested in an investigation that could be used as a basis for

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<sup>185</sup> NEB (1962), “Reg. sociomedical investigation of gypsies living in the Stockholm area intended to be the basis of occupational rehabilitation measures”, Appended plan for the decision concerning a sociomedical investigation, “Memorandum regarding a sociomedical-genetic-sociological study of gypsies in the Stockholm area”. Ref. no. V 599/62, Decision 16/11/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>186</sup> NEB (1962), “Reg. sociomedical investigation of gypsies living in the Stockholm area intended to be the basis of occupational rehabilitation measures”, Appended plan for the decision concerning a sociomedical investigation, “Memorandum regarding a sociomedical-genetic-sociological study of gypsies in the Stockholm area” pages 1–2, Ref. no. V 599/62, Decision 16/11/1962, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>187</sup> NEB (1962), “Reg. sociomedical investigation of gypsies living in the Stockholm area intended to be the basis of occupational rehabilitation measures”, Appended plan for the decision concerning a sociomedical investigation, “Memorandum regarding a sociomedical-genetic-sociological study of gypsies in the Stockholm area”, page 4, Ref. no. V 599/62, Decision 16/11/1962 City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

occupational rehabilitation measures – which meant focusing on Roma who had housing and employment problems – the scientific perspective justified the inclusion of all Roma:

“From a scientific perspective, it was naturally of value that every gypsy was included in the investigation, that is also those who did have acceptable housing and had had regular work for many years.”<sup>188</sup>

The report indicates that all Roma who had been registered by the gypsy advisors in Stockholm had been studied. In addition, families from Finland and Spain who had moved to Stockholm during the investigation period were included.<sup>189</sup> This meant that 328 persons were the subjects of an investigation for which a 20-page journal form containing detailed questions had been drawn up. The information collected included names, addresses and relationships. Racial affiliation, in terms of whether the people in question were “full gypsies”, “half-gypsies” or “non-gypsies”, was also recorded, as well as the country where these people were born. Codes for social, occupational, income, educational and housing class and information about whether the person had used any of the services provided by society, for example health checks, the dental health service, institutions such as old people's homes, infant homes and vaccinations, were regarded as important. Information about driving licences, military service, criminal punishments, forensic psychiatry investigations and charges of drunkenness were required. Questions about schooling, educational level, social involvement in associations, working life and family life were also considered vital. Information about housing conditions was gathered – both current and past. In addition, the form asked for information about diet, with questions about, for example, breast-feeding and daily diet. The form was also used to gather data about sleeping habits, state of health and various test results. Furthermore, information on mental status, aptitude, emotional structure, basic social attitude and physical hygiene were to be filled in. Each person would be allocated a Z-number and a family

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<sup>188</sup> Takman (1963), Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, Stockholmspopulationen, en summarisk rapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, the Stockholm population, a summary report], page 5, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D2 a:1.

<sup>189</sup> Takman (1963), Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963. Stockholmspopulationen, en summarisk rapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, the Stockholm population, a summary report], page 5, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D2 a:1.

group number on the form.<sup>190</sup> A photograph was to be taken of each person, and eight copies made.<sup>191</sup>

This information was structured using a detailed coding schedule. The data was then to be transferred to punch cards for statistical processing.<sup>192</sup> The investigations were carried out at St. Göran's Hospital and in Roma's homes. Two persons who were undergoing treatment for acute complaints at Stockholm South General Hospital had been investigated in conjunction with their treatment.<sup>193</sup>

In conjunction with extensive medical examinations, 168 people who had come into contact with the researchers and were over 15 years old had provided blood and urine samples in exchange for SEK 25 in silver five-kronor coins. The report points out that silver five-kronor coins had not been given because "gypsies are more amused by money in this form than other people, but because this somehow indicated that the blood tests were a particularly important part of the investigation." Several people also received immediate treatment for various diseases in conjunction with the investigation.<sup>194</sup>

The report indicates that those people the investigation needed to get in contact with sometimes had a negative attitude to the investigation itself. This was solved in the following way:

"In order not to risk engendering a dismissive attitude, due to an impersonal invitation or a telephone call, which could be difficult or impossible to turn into a willingness to cooperate, I always conducted these house calls without prior warning. This proved an appropriate introduction to the sociomedical investigation. Not everyone sympathised with our view that their personal experiences were of value to the rehabilitation of others. However, all were keenly aware of

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<sup>190</sup> Diary, *The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963*, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:4.

<sup>191</sup> Takman (1963), *The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963*, Memorandum for gypsy experts on duty. City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:4.

<sup>192</sup> Coding schedule, identification data, *The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963*, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:4.

<sup>193</sup> Takman (1963), *Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963*, *Stockholmspopulationen*, en summarisk rapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, the Stockholm population, a summary report], page 5, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D2 a:1.

<sup>194</sup> Takman (1963), *Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963*, *Stockholmspopulationen*, en summarisk rapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, the Stockholm population, a summary report] by John Takman, pages 7 and 19, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D2 a:1.

the scientific argument that an investigation such as this could become misleading if part of the population was omitted.”<sup>195</sup>

The researchers' report contains an account of how many people were defined as “full gypsies”, “half-gypsies”, “three-quarter-gypsies” and “non-gypsies”. The latter category referred to those who were married to “gypsies”. A register of persons living in Stockholm was presented in the report, as were statistics about their schooling, educational level, occupational experience, housing history, physical medical history and mental status, and each individual was described in detail. Each person was allocated a Z-journal that contained a photograph of him or her. Each journal concluded with an opinion that was sent to the NEB. A copy of this was also sent to the gypsy advisor in Stockholm, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Stockholm Public Social Insurance Agency. The opinions were also provided to local authorities such as child welfare boards, school authorities, etc.<sup>196</sup> The investigation was also sent to the county employment boards in the areas where the people investigated were staying.

Those who became the subjects of the Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963 and were described in Z-journals were included in a social assistance medical officer's own archive following the completion of the investigation. The reason given was that it was assumed many of the cases investigated would become pertinent to the social assistance medical office.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> St. Göran's Hospital (1963), Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, Stockholmspopulationen, en summarisk rapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, the Stockholm population, a summary report] by John Takman, pages 8–9, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D2 a:1.

<sup>196</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnadskalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, Page 19, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7; Uppsala University Department of Social Medicine (1966) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1965, Slutrapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1965, Final Report], 31 March 1966, pages 1–2.

<sup>197</sup> Uppsala University Department of Social Medicine (1966) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1965, Slutrapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1965, Final Report], 31 March 1966, pages 1–2.

### 2.5.2 Investigation of blood groups and other hereditary blood characteristics

As mentioned, one aspect of the investigation was a study of blood characteristics. The reason given was an attempt to establish the race-biological origin of Roma. The Institute for Medical Genetics argued in its report to the NEB that it was a stated fact that the prevalence of different blood groups shows a great deal of “variation between ethnic groups with different racial origins”. In addition, the Institute also maintained that there were good reasons to believe that Roma “are, from the perspective of hereditary biology, to be considered a fairly closed group with an insignificant exchange of genes with the Swedish population”.

The report points out that an analysis of blood from the Swedish “gypsy” population indicated “unambiguously an Asian-Indian racial origin”. It was also reported that blood group investigations of Roma had been conducted in several European countries. The aim of these investigations had been to highlight “purely ethnological problems such as the question of the gypsies' origin, the degree of mixing with other ethnic groups, etc”.

It was concluded, in what came to constitute the final report of the investigation of Roma in Stockholm, that the involvement of the Institute for Medical Genetics in the investigation had been of value:

“Thanks to the Institute for Medical Genetics being involved in our investigation and, as opposed to other departments, its practice of storing blood serum, urine samples, etc., we are now in the advantageous position of having all samples stored in the deep freeze; these may be used in agglutination tests and other laboratory procedures that we did not find cause to include in our original investigatory programme.”<sup>198</sup>

In the final report, the researchers stated that they intended to request grants from research funds to undertake supplementary studies following up this blood group investigation. The results of

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<sup>198</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnads kalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

the investigation were also published in 1965 in an article in the journal *Acta Genetica et Statistica Medica*. The article specified the countries of origin of the people whom the blood of Swedish Roma had been compared with: Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania and France.

### 2.5.3 Anthropological investigation

In accordance with the plan, an anthropological investigation was also performed. The investigation was sent to the Institute for Medical Genetics at Uppsala University. The results of the anthropological measurements were not presented in the report, but were set out in an article by an assistant professor and a social assistance medical officer. In the article, they were said to be working at the Institute for Medical Genetics and Department of Social Medicine at Uppsala University. The tables showed how eye colour, hair colour and body measurements were distributed among Roma and Swedes. In addition, photographs of Roma women and men in profile were presented. Some of the conclusions put forward were that the vast majority of Roma had dark hair and dark eyes, that Roma were shorter than Swedes, that many Roma weighed more than Swedes and that Roma had a different cephalic index to that of Swedes.<sup>199</sup>

### 2.5.4 Proposals for further investigations

The Department of Social Medicine's report to the NEB contained proposals for measures including: business grants for starting small businesses; homes, primarily in the form of small cottages; short summer courses, long-term re-education programmes for young and middle-aged Roma; and short-term camps, in the style of a boarding school, for people who were musicians.<sup>200</sup> Economic

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<sup>199</sup> Beckman and Takman (1965), "On the Anthropology of a Swedish Gypsy Population" in *Hereditas* 53, pages 272–280, 1965.

<sup>200</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) *Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnads kalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar* [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further

calculations concerning a further study of Roma in Stockholm, as well as those in other parts of the country, were set out in a memorandum to the NEB. The stated aim was to “lay the groundwork for rehabilitation measures in the individual cases and for similar measures targeting gypsies as a group”. It was also stressed that such an investigation would make a significant contribution to science:

“Obviously, we also have expectations that interesting and practically useful scientific results will emerge as a by-product of the investigation. These expectations have grown during the stage of the investigation that has now been conducted.”<sup>201</sup>

The report states that 12 persons in Stockholm had undergone a psychological aptitude test, which was considered insufficient. According to the report, at least 50 people should be investigated. However, a further genetic study did not need to be carried out as the investigation up to this point had provided unambiguous results. In addition, it was believed that a further genetic study would make the entire investigation too expensive as this would need to be conducted in a hospital environment. A further investigation would, according to the report, survey a population consisting of 600 people split into 200 family groups. In this way, the investigation could comprehensively survey “every full gypsy, every non-gypsy married to a full gypsy and every half-gypsy, three-quarters-gypsy and similar”.<sup>202</sup>

An investigation of the entire “gypsy” population would, according to the memorandum, provide interesting data with which to compare the nomadic population with the urbanised, but would

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investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, pages 19–25, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>201</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnads kalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, page 3, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>202</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnads kalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, page 4, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.



primarily illustrate the various phases in the development from one level to the other.<sup>203</sup>

Uppsala University's Department of Social Medicine was given a renewed mandate to undertake an investigation of Roma in the entire country. The Department's report on this assignment to the NEB indicates that the investigation was conducted in accordance with the plan and in line with how the investigation had previously been implemented in Stockholm. Along with the report, the Department presented detailed tables showing how the entire Roma population was distributed by the racial categories "full gypsy", "half-gypsy" and "non-gypsy". There were also tables showing the age distribution between "non-gypsies", Swedish "gypsies", Spanish "gypsies", Finnish "gypsies" and others. Furthermore, there were tables containing the distribution of those investigated by county, marital status, sex, whether or not they were vaccinated, whether they dressed in the "Swedish manner" or the "gypsy manner", number of semesters in primary school, reading and writing ability, etc. The Department presented a total of 40 tables in their report to the NEB.<sup>204</sup>

## 2.6 The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1959–1997

One of the conclusions of the Gypsy Inquiry (SOU 1956:43) was that one of the most important prerequisites if Roma were to gain access both to schooling and work was access to housing. Just as important was to counteract the "unresponsive attitude" of municipalities, property owners and neighbours. As described earlier, it was believed that the appointment of a "gypsy advisor" in municipal organisations could contribute to a more positive attitude among the general public and government authorities. In

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<sup>203</sup> Department of Social Medicine (1963) Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1963, kommentarer till undersökningen av Stockholmspopulationen och förslag med kostnadskalkyl beträffande fortsatta undersökningar [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1963, comments on the investigation of the Stockholm population and proposals with cost calculations for further investigations], dat. 17/05/1963, page 4, City of Stockholm Archives, Takman's Archive, Volume A:7.

<sup>204</sup> Takman (1966), Zigenarundersökningen 1962–1965. Slutrapport [The Gypsy Investigation 1962–1965. Final report], 31 March 1966. Investigation commissioned by the National Employment Board and conducted by Uppsala University's Department of Social Medicine.

addition to combating discrimination, the gypsy advisor would pilot Roma through their dealings with government authorities and other public bodies.

The Gypsy Section was established as a municipal body in Stockholm in 1959 and it employed a gypsy advisor who had a background in social work. As early as 1957, however, Stockholm's social welfare board had applied for a grant to employ an advisor, but this was refused on the grounds that they wanted to wait for the commission of inquiry's official report. Another justification for the refusal was that the city would not take measures that could increase the number of Roma in the city.

When the Section was formed in May 1959, there were some 200 Roma camped on sites designated by the city. The Section found that poverty was widespread and that many were living on the extreme margins. Its activities were initially directed at solving the housing issue. In the early years, the organisation focused on equipping campsites with electricity, water and sanitation. In 1960, one campsite was built at Skarpnäck and another at Flaten, both south of Stockholm, on the advice of Stockholm City's real estate department. At the same time, temporary housing in Hammarbyttäppan was put to use on a trial basis.<sup>205</sup> Subsequently, the Section also devoted time to boosting educational levels and to social training, or rehabilitation as it was known.<sup>206</sup> The same pattern was followed in other cities (e.g. Malmö and Gothenburg).<sup>207</sup>

In conjunction with the disbandment of the Gypsy Section in 1997, the social services' head of section requested an exception from the obligation to delete data in Section 60 of the Social Services Act. The justification given for this request was that the Gypsy Section was one of the largest repositories of knowledge in Sweden on issues concerning Roma and an intact archive would facilitate Roma genealogical research and academic research into

<sup>205</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997 [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 27, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK. More about housing conditions for Roma in Chapter 7, Gränser för bostad [Housing limitations].

<sup>206</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997 [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 5, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>207</sup> Montesino, Norma (2010), Romer i svensk myndighetspolitik – ett historiskt perspektiv [Roma in Swedish government authority policy – a historical perspective]. Report from the School of Social Work 2010:2.

this minority group. The request for an exception stated that the personal files “in a strict sense [are not social services files] as they contain a lot of other material that is not social services material”. The request was approved.<sup>208</sup>

The historian Lena Ericsson is of the opinion that, during the period the Section was active, it appears to have swung between different objectives: on the one hand, there was a desire to target measures aimed at helping the group get access to housing and lifting the group out of discrimination and illiteracy etc.; on the other hand, there was also a desire to control the group and the Section was to some extent sure that what was termed the “gypsy problem” was in some way the group's own fault, something that could be corrected by assimilation and normalisation.<sup>209</sup> According to Ericsson, some recurring descriptions of Roma that guided the organisation in its work were: “lack of responsibility”, “disturbing way of life”, “old-fashioned mode of life”, “deliberate isolation”, “ignorance/immaturity”, “disloyalty”, “divergent cultural patterns”, “odd groups”, “criminality”.<sup>210</sup> Ericsson also believes, having read through the Section's documents, that the organisation repeatedly attempted to acquire more knowledge through projects, expert and consultation groups and similar bodies at various levels, between different parties and with different objectives.<sup>211</sup> Ericsson shows that one constantly recurring issue in the Section's activities is its perception that the situation for Roma was not improving. The “gypsy problem” was just as pertinent in 1997 as it had been in 1958.<sup>212</sup>

Every aspect of the lives of Roma was subject to scrutiny. This at least was the case for Roma registered with the Gypsy Section.<sup>213</sup> Roma were even subjected to scrutiny and assessment in their own

<sup>208</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 41, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>209</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 16, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>210</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 18, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>211</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 23, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>212</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), *Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997* [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 44, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>213</sup> The Gypsy Section's archive contains a list of Roma living in Gothenburg in 1961, drawn up by Gothenburg Municipality, PM “Förteckning” [Memorandum “List”] dat. Gothenburg January 1961, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, D3:1.

homes. When officials scrutinised conditions in the camps, they made assessments of the orderliness of both the campsite as a whole and the individual homes. People who had flats were also subjected to inspections. Orderliness was assessed on a scale of “good”, “reasonable” or “bad” in a memorandum from 1961, *Redogörelse om zigenarnas sätt att existera i respektive läger och lägenhet* [Report on gypsies' way of life in camps and flats]. The Section also produced statistics on the number and causes of complaints about Roma tenants in flats. The Section checked up on how Roma were living, whether they were lodgers, living in overcrowded conditions or had a modern flat.

The Gypsy Section also registered the absenteeism, achievements, intelligence and conduct of schoolchildren and adult pupils. Initially, the information came from a research programme funded by the Section. The programme required extensive information about pupils and their families and considerable documentation and monitoring. At the same time, the research programme's aim bears witness to the fact that data gathering took place at the expense of equivalence.<sup>214</sup>

Ericsson has also found that the Gypsy Section created hundreds of personal files on Roma who were born between 1881 and 1980 and were living in Stockholm. The files encompass 64 volumes, with individual files containing everything from a few pages to around fifty or so. Each of the files contains personal data and information about family members, the size of the household and the quality of the housing. Many files contain medical records, wage slips, police reports, child welfare cases and officials' opinions about the ways of life of individuals and families, as well as assessments of how “the gypsies acquit themselves”. The files also contain tax returns, applications for social security and housing benefits, rental contracts, eviction notices, etc. Ericsson ascertains that every conceivable documented interaction with the public authorities appears in the files. Each file also contains a record card on which is described, sometimes briefly and sometimes in detail on separate sheets, the individual's situation, their contact with the Gypsy Section and what action the Section has taken. The

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<sup>214</sup> This discussion is developed in the White Paper's chapter on the access of Roma to education.

municipal officials wrote assessments of the personal characteristics of the families and individuals: “decent family”, “intellectually, the husband is judged to be clearly superior to the wife”, “very well turned out girl”, “emotionally, neither the husband nor the wife are thought to have much of a range”.<sup>215</sup>

Reading through the files also shows that the people described in them have been coded with “Z”, “non-Z” and “half-Z”. At regular intervals, the Section has updated the information about where the people in the files live, even after their cases with the authority appear to have been concluded. The final notes about where people live are from the year the Section was disbanded.

In addition to the personal files, the Gypsy Section's archive contains four registers under the headings “Gypsy families in Sweden”, “Gypsy register”, “The Gypsy Investigation” and “Gypsy card index”. *Gypsy families in Sweden* was drawn up by an expert attached to the NEB and the Gypsy Investigation of 1954 and spans the years 1947–1962, containing personal and family details, including family trees and photographs. *Gypsy register* is a register in the form of a list that claims to cover the years 1955–1992 and contains information about Roma in Sweden, with names, year of birth, place of birth, census registration and marital status up until 1968. After 1968, there is only information about Roma living in Stockholm. The goal of the data gathering was to gain comprehensive information about the number of families, single people, men, women and minor children and the total number of Roma persons. In addition the register contains the number of deaths and births, as well as the number of Finnish “gypsies” and other foreign “gypsies” and the number of who had moved to Stockholm. *The Gypsy Investigation* is the archive established by a social assistance medical officer in 1962 and 1963 in connection with his study of the health of Roma. This also contains personal data, health information and photographs covering 89 families. The investigation is contained within three volumes. The register contains extensive information about individuals' reading ability, health status, dental health, management of their home, personal characteristics, employment and housing history, aptitude and

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<sup>215</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997 [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], page 41, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

personal hygiene. *Gypsy card index* is a card index comprising five volumes organised by family name and linked to the personal files.<sup>216</sup>

## 2.7 The National Board of Health and Welfare 1960-1980

Between 1960 and 1980, the National Board of Health and welfare was the key government authority the municipalities turned to in order to apply for state reimbursement of the costs associated with providing Roma with access to housing. The working practice built up around the “Z” code also formed the basis of this activity. In 1973, the National Board of Health and Welfare conducted a survey looking at the educational and employment situation of Roma. The Board asked for names, dates of birth, family composition, schooling, vocational education, employment and livelihood. Of the 464 municipalities, 415 responded.<sup>217</sup> There are a total of 81 volumes of personal dossiers. In the registers found in the Board's archives, each person is designated as a “Z”, “½ Z”, “¼ Z” or “not Z”. One aspect of this activity involved the Board setting up a register of personal dossiers covering “gypsies”. Finnish “gypsies” are registered in a separate register. Each person was assigned a card that was linked to a family tree with a Z-number. These cards contain information about people born from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 1970s.<sup>218</sup>

The Board's documents also show that a file number, with Z and a name, is listed on decisions about reimbursements to municipalities. Accordingly, it is possible to link decisions to a specific family tree.<sup>219</sup> The Board also has personal files containing

<sup>216</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), Zigenarsektionen i Stockholms stad 1958–1997 [The Gypsy Section in Stockholm 1958–1997], pages 42–43, Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>217</sup> Enkät ang. utbildnings- och arbetssituation för de svenska zigenarna, till Sociala nämnder/Sociala centralnämnder [Questionnaire regarding the educational and employment situation of Swedish gypsies, to Social services boards/Central social services boards], dat. 19/07/1973, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, Fva: 1, National Archives.

<sup>218</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, Fvb: 1–3, National Archives.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. e.g. Minutes. Meeting of 12/1/1968, Ref. no. 5:279 g/67, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, A III, Volume 2.

its own decisions. In addition to municipal documents in which officials have noted assessments of the people in question, these files also contain notes about the relationships of those concerned to other Roma, decisions about children who have been taken into care, etc.<sup>220</sup> As late as 1981, the Board drew up a list of “gypsies” in the country.<sup>221</sup>

## 2.8 Concluding remarks

Roma were subjected to extensive survey by both central and local government throughout the 20th century. This survey has simultaneously functioned as a starting point and basis for both proposed measures and analyses. What is striking about many of the extensive registers of Roma is that they have built up and confirmed negative conceptions about Roma rather than challenging them. The registers have thus played a part in the growth of prejudice against Roma. Their genesis and objectives, however, have varied.

In the first half of the century, it was the police and municipal officials who were tasked with reporting on the number of Roma and their living conditions and with proposing measures to government committees of inquiry and public authorities. The National Board of Health and Welfare is one of the public authorities that defined Roma based on race-biological terms and as a burden on society. The Board asserted on several occasions that the group was unwanted and should therefore be surveyed and registered. The Board also recommended that the group be subjected to sterilisation. The municipal bodies who were tasked with registering Roma and proposing measures were also those who were involved in the implementation of the sterilisation legislation, which is described in the chapter on sterilisation and children being taken into care.

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<sup>220</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, Fvb: 1-81, National Archives.

<sup>221</sup> “Förteckning över svenska zigenare” [“List of Swedish gypsies”], 09/1981, Bureau S, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, A III, Volume 1, National Archives.

In the second half of the 20th century, survey of the number of Roma and their living conditions continued, and it was in this period that Roma were assigned the codes “Z”, “non-Z”, “half-Z”, with an associated number that was linked to a register and a personal file. What is remarkable about the surveys that took place in this period is that it was conducted as an integral part of publicly funded organisations such as the Gypsy Section in Stockholm Municipality and the National Board of Health and Welfare. It is clear that when municipalities took responsibility for the housing conditions of Roma, which was assumed would have positive consequences for the conditions of Roma in the labour market and their access to education, Roma also became subject to greater societal observation and survey. Many of the municipal measures that began during the second half of the 20th century were taken with the intention of helping Roma, but it may also be concluded that the very way in which surveys took place goes beyond what may be considered justifiable for the purpose of running an appropriate, efficient organisation.

In several interviews, Roma have stressed that the relationship between themselves and the public authorities is characterised by mistrust.

“All Roma I know are careful when they come into contact with the public authorities. I know that the public authorities' assessments are not neutral, but are coloured by negative conceptions about Roma. About me. As a result, my room for manoeuvre and my chances of influencing public authorities' decisions are minimal. This fear of the public authorities has been around for generations. My father dreaded the public authorities. He trusted very few people from the majority population and this was because he'd had bad experiences. He knew that the public authorities could make decisions over our heads. We did what we could to keep the public authorities away from us and, as I said, my childhood fear and my father's fear of the public authorities has stuck with me; the mistrust and fear is strong to this day. Juha Nyman<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Juha Nyman, 24 May 2012. Ref. no. A2013 2011/861/DISK.



## 3 Sterilisation and children being taken into care

### 3.1 Introduction

Over the course of 40 years, more specifically 1934–1974, Sweden had legislation that prescribed sterilisation in certain circumstances.

A review of the government committees of inquiry and research into the sterilisation legislation indicates that it is relatively well elucidated in terms of its structure and ideological background. Light has also been shed on its place and function in the Swedish welfare state and how questions about voluntariness and compulsion were woven into a social hygiene project with far-reaching complications, in particular with regard to encroachments on women's bodies.<sup>223</sup> However, none of these studies has had the primary aim of investigating if and how Roma were affected by the sterilisation legislation. Instead, the issue of Roma vulnerability has been regarded as a part of other questions and only a few applications concerning Roma have been found in random samples of applications for sterilisation. One general conclusion from these studies has therefore been that there is no support for the assumption that sterilisation was a measure directed at Roma.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. e.g. Runcis, Maja (1998), *Steriliseringar i folkhemmet* [Sterilisation in the Swedish welfare state]; Hirdman, Yvonne (1989), *Att lägga livet till rätta. Studier i svensk folkhemspolitik* [Putting life in order. Studies of Swedish welfare policy].

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Tydén, Mattias (2000), *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975, Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22, pages 62 ff; Bukowska Jacobsson, Monica (2000), "En kartläggning" [A survey], appendix five in SOU 2000:20 *Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975. Historisk belysning – kartläggning- intervjuer jämte bilagor* [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices], page 240; Larsson, Ola (2012), *Omänskligt – om rasbiologins historia. Ett studiematerial om sortering, normer och makt* [Inhuman – the history of racial biology. A study guide on classification, norms and power],

Nor is there any research that specifically sets out the significance of Roma affiliation for children being taken into care. The sociologist Tommy Lundström has, however, written a thesis analysing the enforced foster cares in Stockholm County during the 20th century. He concludes that ethnic affiliation had a role to play in decisions on taking children into the care of the public authorities. Particularly vulnerable were families in which one or two of the parents were not Swedish.<sup>225</sup>

Nevertheless, Roma and representatives of Roma organisations have expressed the view that sterilisation and enforced foster care were intimately connected and were directed against them. Accordingly, for the purposes of this White Paper it is deemed imperative to examine whether, and to what extent, Roma ethnic affiliation has played a significant role in decisions about sterilisation and children being taken into care.

The chapter begins by describing Roma experiences of sterilisation and children being taken into care. These experiences have been taken from interviews conducted while preparing this White Paper and from the literature. Then follows a general overview of the preparatory works to the sterilisation legislation. The aim of this is to illuminate the political context of the sterilisation question by showing how the legislative powers justified the introduction of the sterilisation acts of 1934 and 1941. The chapter is also based on two studies by Paulina de los Reyes, “Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande” [An insoluble problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers]<sup>226</sup> and “Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar

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page 55; Lundmark, Lennart (2007), Allt som kan mätas är inte vetenskap- en populärhistorisk skrift om Rasbiologiska institutet [Not everything that can be measured is science – a popular history of the Institute for Racial Biology], page 31.

<sup>225</sup> Lundström, Tommy (1993), Tvångsomhändertagande av barn: En studie av lagarna, professionerna och praktiken under 1900-talet [Enforced foster care: A study of the legislation, professions and practices during the 20th century].

<sup>226</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2012) Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers]. Ref. no. A2011/1901/DISK.

om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet” [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s].<sup>227</sup>

### 3.2 Roma experiences of sterilisation and children being taken into care

Several of the people interviewed have described their experiences of sterilisation and children being taken into care. These experiences are all similar. The pattern and similarities are striking:

“My people and I were called the tattare scourge and policies in Sweden have had the aim of eradicating us as a people. It hasn’t been long since we were subjected to an explicit policy built on an idea that we were the lowest stratum of society and that we should not survive. My parents have, fortunately, avoided sterilisation. If they had been sterilised, I and my children wouldn’t be here today.” Eleonor Frankemo<sup>228</sup>

“Many Traveller families are and have been afraid of the public authorities. Travellers have always had to look after themselves and have had to stand apart from society as a result. We knew that if we asked for help the public authorities would have a reason to keep an eye on us and then child welfare could start an investigation into your family circumstances and once the investigation was up and running, well, it was not too great a step for the public authorities to decide that the children would be taken into care and placed far away from their parents.” Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström<sup>229</sup>

“All Travellers I know are afraid of the public authorities. We’ve had bad experiences with the child welfare board. We felt constantly threatened and controlled. What we were most afraid of was that the child welfare board would take us and put us in a children’s home or foster home. My siblings and I have been taken into care at various times. The public authorities made decisions over the heads of parents and children; we couldn’t influence their decision-making at all. The relationship with the public authorities was not on our terms. We’ had no idea that we could demand better housing or help from the poor relief board. We did what we could to keep the public authorities away

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<sup>227</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s]. Ref. no. A2011/1174/DISK.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Juha Nyman, 5 June 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström, 13 September 2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

from us, and my childhood fear of the public authorities has stuck with me to this day. That fear of the public authorities, the social services in particular, is strong even today. Stig-Ove Lundahl<sup>230</sup>

“My mother and my aunt were sterilised. Sterilisation was used by the public authorities to halt what they called “the tattare scourge”. It was me who was “the tattare scourge”. My mother was sterilised because she was from a tattare family and it was done when she was expecting a child. I know that the public authorities accepted the advice and opinions of neighbours and the school. Us children were used for blackmail – if my mother didn't agree to be sterilised, we'd be placed in foster homes. Away from her. We wouldn't be allowed to have children because society regarded us as bad people and believed that allowing us to remain would have a detrimental effect on society. Taking children into care was also a method the public authorities developed in order to halt what they regarded as “the tattare scourge”. It's clear that the public authorities' interventions in the travelling peoples' family lives must be interpreted in the context of the public authorities' pernicious and racially motivated perceptions about us. There's a sense of denial and ignorance that this has actually happened.” Rose-Marie Wallengren<sup>231</sup>

“Because of a routine check, the public authorities learned that my mother was pregnant for the third time. She was seven months pregnant. She was given an ultimatum: agree to an abortion and sterilisation or we'll take your children into care. So she was forced to have both the abortion and the sterilisation. And so my family couldn't get any bigger. This tormented my parents enormously as they would have liked to have had more children. But they were forced to pay this price in order to keep me and my brother. This is the context in which we children grew up. Our history is marked by a great fear of the public authorities. And by that I mean all types of authority. To this day, I feel this fear when dealing with the public authorities. The rest of society has always regarded us as second-class citizens. To always be afraid and live on charity meant that we sought security in one another, in our family. That's why we don't have much to do with those outside the family. We were constantly on our guard.” Soraya Post<sup>232</sup>

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Stig-Ove Lundahl, 5 June 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Rose-Marie Wallengren, 25 May 2012. Ref. no. A2013 2011/861/DISK.

<sup>232</sup> Soraya Post (2005) “Rätt till liv” [Right to life] in Jansson, Karl Axel & Schmid, Ingemar (Eds.) *Ett fördrivet folk. Antologi om förtryck och diskriminering av romer/zigenare/resande* [A banished people. An anthology of oppression and discrimination against Roma/Gypsies/Travellers], page 63.

“I grew up in a world where people felt the main thing was to get us to go away. It wasn't important where we went. Only that we go away, away, away. Often, we'd hardly finished pitching our tents before the police superintendent or some local bigwig turned up and told us we weren't welcome, that we were undesirable. Then we had to pack up our things and look for another place, a new municipality. In winter it was frosty and below zero; we were cold a lot. Feet and hands became numb. We lost feeling in them. It was hard, or rather impossible, to keep out the cold. Infants died. Quilts froze to the tent canvas. In autumn the tents were often wet from the rain. It was not unusual for the rain to get in. Everything got wet. I remember the cold and the damp being worst. Two of my children were born in the winter and I chose to put them in a children's home. I asked that they be put in a children's home when I was in the maternity hospital. We were living in a tent at the time and I knew that the children would not have survived if they'd spent that first period living with us in the tent. I had no choice but to let them live in a children's home for the first few months. We pitched our tent close to the children's home so I could visit the child every day. When it got warmer, I collected my child.” Singoalla Millon<sup>233</sup>

“The decision to take me into care was made when I was two or three years old. That's why my parents gave me away to relatives in different parts of the country. I was only actually taken into care when I was four. I can't remember much from back then, but relatives have told me what happened. It was a nightmare for all of us. We were with my aunt Hulda in Gothenburg when the doorbell rang. When we opened the door, five or six police officers burst in. My father was knocked to the floor and the police put him in handcuffs. I sat in my mother's lap, but two women from child welfare ripped me from her arms. After that I was driven to a children's home in a police car. I've been told that I was an inquisitive and happy little boy before that, a little precocious. After I was taken into care, I became quiet and introverted. I probably had post-traumatic stress disorder.

This was turned against me and my family, I was branded an idiot. The doctor who examined me at the children's home said that I was “maladjusted” because I was from “tattare stock”. And that there was no medical reason why I screamed and cried. Later on I understood that it was listed in my papers that I was a “tattare” and that my father was “work-shy, black and looked malevolent”. That was why I was taken into care. I remember that I was called “tattare boy” by the warden who came to let me into the children's home. I didn't know

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<sup>233</sup> Interview with Singoalla Millon, 23 May 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

then what it meant, but I really got to learn that throughout my whole childhood.” Kurt Magnusson<sup>234</sup>

“When I was ten years old, six or seven people came to our home. There was a doctor, police officers and representatives of the social services and child welfare board. My youngest siblings were torn away from my mother, who went into a state of shock. I’d experienced a dreadful premonition prior to that. And a few hours later, a black car drove up to the farm. Mother screamed in Romani: ‘Run and hide, run and hide!’ Not all of us could run, several of my siblings were little, but I ran towards the forest. A police officer caught up with me and screamed: ‘You think you can run away from me, you tattare swine!’ We were taken to a cottage hospital first. A doctor there measured our heads and wrote down details about our appearance. We were only taken away because my family and I were Travellers. They changed our names at the foster home. Just so as our parents wouldn’t be able to find us. The twins were separated. I think that was the worst. I was then moved several times; none of the foster families actually wanted me. In their eyes I was just a “tattare”. They didn’t know anything about us – what sort of people we really were. We Travellers were involved in building this country, especially when it comes to farming and trade. But instead of sitting down and reading about our history, they hated us. Many Travellers I meet today who, like me, were taken into care didn’t know when they were children that they were Travellers. They still don’t know what this means or involves.” Tommy Lindgren<sup>235</sup>

“When my sister and I were taken into care, we were ripped out of our context, taken from our roots. Entries in the child welfare board’s records indicate that my sister and I could not be placed with my grandparents. The reason given was that they were tattare. My grandparents had a house and an optician’s.

If we’d been placed with them, our lives would have started differently and we certainly wouldn’t have fared as badly as we did by being placed so far from our roots. The public authorities saw us as second-class citizens who would be brought up to become worthy citizens thanks to their intervention. I was a victim of maltreatment throughout the whole of my childhood. I was constantly told that I was worthless. I’m happy that the Maltreatment Inquiry was set up and that this describes what actually happened to us when we were placed in foster homes and institutions. It’s 100 per cent true. Over the course of my childhood I lived in children’s homes, foster homes and summer

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<sup>234</sup> Interview with Kurt Magnusson, 1 June 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Tommy Lindgren, 9 January 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

homes. I was even placed in a reform school. The only fixed point in my life was my sister, who is two years younger. Every move also involved having to start at a new school, which meant I haven't had uninterrupted schooling. Getting a good start in life in terms of education and making friends wasn't easy in these circumstances. Everyone in the class knew that I was from a children's home, it was obvious from my clothes, if nothing else. I still remember the other children's looks and behaviour. I was never one of the gang. I was just the tattare boy who lived in the children's home or in a foster home. I often felt lost. I was not accepted for who I am, by that I mean a Traveller. I tried to play a role in order to fit in, to be taken seriously, to be treated as a person." Peter Johansson<sup>236</sup>

"My mother became a single parent when I was born. She and my three-year older brother lived in a tent back then. We were forced to move north, where my mother had relatives who'd been given permission by the municipality to pitch camp for a short time. Because of the difficult circumstances, my mother couldn't take care of me and I was placed in a children's home in Stockholm. I was cared for lovingly there, but when I was nine months old I was moved to another children's home in Stockholm. Visiting time was only a couple of hours every Sunday. My mother's finances were in such a state that a couple of months or more might go by between each visit. When I was 18 months old, she'd saved up enough money to take the train from a town in northern Sweden to Stockholm. She was met at the children's home by a member of staff who asked to speak to her in private. She described how I was subjected to force-feeding and was bathed in cold water when I was disobedient. A couple of days later I was released from my torture and was allowed to go home to my family at the camp.

Initially I refused to eat and the problem became the entire camp's concern. My mother managed to get me to eat fairly normally after a couple of weeks, but the abuse meant that I screamed at the sight of anything white. White sinks and white aprons were my biggest fear. Mother asked everyone to avoid wearing anything white. The memories from the children's home came to me in my sleep up until I was in my teens, I had nightmares and was woken by my own screaming and crying." Hans Caldaras<sup>237</sup>

"I spent my entire childhood in children's homes or reform schools. I was always being called a "bloody tattare" and "tattare scum". I was clipped around the ear and kicked on a daily basis for no reason.

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<sup>236</sup> Interview with Peter Johansson, 14 December 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>237</sup> Spontaneous account by Hans Caldaras in connection with an interview, 10 September 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

Beatings with the cane and the birch, which had been dipped in salt water, were also common. Probably because I was a Traveller, or “tattare” as we were called back then. I was also tormented when I went to school. Neither the children's home nor school were safe places for me. I was also subjected to tests. At some point in 1944, when I was eight years old, I was taken to a hospital in Vänersborg where my head was measured and I had to draw various symbols. The other children who lived in the children's home didn't have to do these kinds of tests. My mother died in 1944. It was only four years later, 1948, that I learned she was no longer alive. When I asked the staff at the children's home why I hadn't been informed about her death so I could at the very least have gone to her funeral, I was told that it wouldn't have been good for me to meet my relatives. People from the public authorities made these decisions over our heads in those days. We were regarded as a problem and they wanted to wipe out Traveller culture by placing us far away from our relatives.” Bror Sandberg<sup>238</sup>

“Throughout my entire childhood I've had to hear how worthless I am and I've been deprived of my language and culture by being taken into care as a child. It's clear that the child welfare board and foster parents wanted to cut our family ties and to place me far away from my family. In children's homes and foster homes, I had to obey the clock and my foster parents. My childhood was filled with demands, rules, routines and work. Standing in long queues to eat or wash. Punches, hair pulling and clips round the ear. The foster family's norms, routines and rules had to be followed. My background was to be obliterated, that was why my brother and I were taken into care. This still affects me to this day. When I meet new people I'm always worried about what will happen if they find out who I am. I'm scared that they won't see me for who I am, that they'll be prejudiced against me. This is even true in my closest relationships. I still haven't told my mother- or father-in-law that I'm a Traveller. My husband doesn't know, either. Marie Johansson Bergman<sup>239</sup>

### 3.3 The sterilisation question's context

A government committee of inquiry was set up at the end of the 1990s to investigate the sterilisation question. One of this inquiry's tasks was to design a system of economic compensation for people who had been sterilised against their will or at the behest of someone else. Another of its tasks was to look at the wording and

<sup>238</sup> Interview with Bror Sandberg, 23 November 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Marie Johansson Bergman, 23 May 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.



application of the legislation and place the sterilisation question in its historical context.<sup>240</sup> A range of independent reports were commissioned and included as appendices to the final report.<sup>241</sup>

One of these reports contains a survey of who was sterilised based on a selection of 2 088 application documents for persons born on the 15th of each month.<sup>242</sup> For the period from 1941 to 1952, 22 files were found containing an application for sterilisation in which the applicant is described as a “tattare” and three persons who are termed “gypsies”. Two of those who had been termed “gypsies” and fifteen of those designated “tattare” had also been described as “mentally deficient”.<sup>243</sup> The report establishes that if these figures are applied to the total number of just over 62 000 applications for sterilisation, the number of people designated “tattare” would amount to between 600 and 800 and between 450 and 600 of these would have been sterilised.<sup>244</sup>

Given the results in this report, the inquiry concluded that there was a lack of evidence that Roma had been specifically targeted by the sterilisation policy:

“The survey has specifically looked at certain underprivileged groups such as ethnic minorities and other social groups involuntarily subjected [to sterilisation]. The source material contains only a small

<sup>240</sup> SOU 2000:20, Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975. Historisk belysning – kartläggning- intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997]. Govt. Bill 1998/99:71, Ersättning av staten till steriliserade i vissa fall [State compensation to those sterilised in certain cases].

<sup>241</sup> SOU 2000:20, Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975. Historisk belysning – kartläggning – intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

<sup>242</sup> Bukowska Jacobsson, Monica (2000), “En kartläggning” [A survey], Appendix 4 in SOU 2000:20 Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – kartläggning – intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

<sup>243</sup> Bukowska Jacobsson, Monica (2000), “En kartläggning” [A survey], Appendix 4 in SOU 2000:20 Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – kartläggning – intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

<sup>244</sup> Bukowska Jacobsson, Monica (2000), “En kartläggning” [A survey], Appendix 4 in SOU 2000:20 Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – kartläggning – intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

number of people directly described in terms such as tattare, gypsy or Sami.”<sup>245</sup>

Another report commissioned by the Sterilisation Inquiry comes to the following conclusion:

“However, no sections were found in the acts that designated tattare as a group specifically targeted for sterilisation. Nor were they mentioned in the National Board of Medicine's Advice and Instructions on the Application of the Sterilisation Act. Nevertheless, to sum up, there was extensive discussion in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s about the need for racial hygiene measures, including sterilisation, directed at tattare. It is also clear that labelling someone a tattare has frequently contributed to applications and resultant operations in as many as 500 cases.”<sup>246</sup>

Accordingly, it is possible to see two lines that have led to the conclusion that there is no support for the interpretation that Roma were a group specifically targeted by the sterilisation policy. The first bases its argument on a quantitative investigation of those sterilisation files that can be associated with Roma affiliation. Although it stressed that the absolute numbers derived from the random sample were uncertain, the Sterilisation Inquiry concluded that no support could be found for the theory that sterilisations specifically targeted Roma.<sup>247</sup>

The second line is based on the premise that there were no express rules or legislation concerning the sterilisation of Roma. Categorisation as a “tattare” could, however, affect the decision on

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<sup>245</sup> Bukowska Jacobsson, Monica (2000), “En kartläggning” [A survey], Appendix 4 in SOU 2000:20 Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – kartläggning – intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

<sup>246</sup> Tydén, Mattias (2000), Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975, Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22, page 63

<sup>247</sup> SOU 2000:20, Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – Kartläggning – Intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices], page 17; cf. de los Reyes, Paulina (2012) Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers], pages 19–20.

sterilisation, but only on condition that the person in question already met the indications set out in the sterilisation legislation.<sup>248</sup>

As shown above, Roma believe sterilisation was a measure specifically directed at them. This hardly tallies with the research results that have served as a guide thus far. It is of course not possible to establish an objective truth from an analysis of the sterilisation policy's content and consequences, and any analysis must be considered in terms of whose opinion is taken into account and which perceptions and problems are examined:

“The discrepancy between the groups' collective memories of sterilisation and their peripheral position in the sterilisation policy's official history raises many questions. How can this discrepancy be explained? How are these different stories to be evaluated? What has been silenced, hidden or excluded to separate these stories?”<sup>249</sup>

One of the conclusions in de los Reyes' study *Ett olösligt problem? Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande* [An insoluble problem? Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers] is that the research conducted into the sterilisation legislation in Sweden has contributed to the creation of a misleading picture of the extent of the sterilisation policy and its consequences for Roma. The Sterilisation Inquiry's use of absolute figures and its failure to define relevant points of comparison or specify time periods has meant that it is unclear what the inquiry's figures on the number of Roma actually show. In addition, de los Reyes argues that the investigators' use of quantitative methods resulted in important aspects not being given the space they deserve regarding the significance of Roma affiliation when people were subjected to sterilisation.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2012) *Ett olösligt problem, rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande* [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers], pages 19–20.

<sup>249</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande* [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers], page 21. Ref. no. A2011/1901/DISK.

<sup>250</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande* [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers], page 31. Ref. no. A2011/1901/DISK.

A qualitative method, with analysis of the files, could have provided important information about the motives behind decisions on sterilisation and thus contributed to our of how the ethnic classification took place. De los Reyes writes that a qualitative analysis could have provided a more reliable answer if it had also been related to relevant points of comparison. The journalist Bo Hazell also calls for a different of the effects of the sterilisation policy on Roma:

“Statistical calculations based on the government committee of inquiry of 1997 show that between 600 and 700 of the sterilisation documents submitted were categorised as applying to “tattare”. Of these, 450 to 500 citizens have been sterilised against their will, with reference to their ethnic origin. Because the number of “tattare” was deemed, following the public authorities’ racial registration in 1944, to be 8 000 individuals living in 2 000 households, this means that at least one in four Traveller households contained someone who was forcibly sterilised”<sup>251</sup>

The extent of the sterilisation programme takes on a different scale if the figures are compared to the estimated number of Roma in Sweden instead of being analysed in absolute numbers. As Hazell demonstrates, such a calculation would in fact have been able to show that a very large proportion of Roma households were affected.

The Sterilisation Inquiry's analysis of the three cases defined as having involved “gypsies” is also misleading, argues de los Reyes. She believes that if the inquiry had related the identified cases to the information about the number of “gypsies”, 498, established by the National Board of Health and Welfare's inventory, a confidence interval spanning between 28 and 210 cases would have been arrived at with a confidence level of 95 per cent.

The confidence interval is, as de los Reyes points out, actually too large to draw any conclusions about how many Roma were subjected to sterilisation. Even so, she is of the opinion that the figures can be read as an indication that more Roma may have been

<sup>251</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Ett olösligt problem. Rapport om steriliseringslagarnas konsekvenser för romer och resande* [An unsolvable problem. Report on the consequences of the sterilisation acts for Roma and Travellers], page 32, Ref. no. A2012/1901/DISK; Hazell, Bo (2011), *Resandefolket. Från tattare till traveller* [The travelling people. From tattare to Travellers], pages 132–133.

subjected to sterilisation than has previously been claimed, primarily in relation to the size of the Roma population in the 1940s.

De los Reyes' examination of the sterilisation files from 1945, a total of 1 426, also arrives at this conclusion. She states that the people affected are termed "tattare" or "gypsies" in 46 applications, concerning 25 women and 21 men. This deviates from the overall gender distribution for the year, i.e. 32.4 per cent men and 67.7 per cent women. Only one of the applications that use the words "tattare" or "gypsy" was refused by the National Board of Medicine. This can be compared to the approval rate for the entire year, which was 94 per cent.<sup>252</sup>

### 3.3.1 The Sterilisation Act of 1934

The chapter on the survey of Roma provides a picture of the perceptions about this community that guided the public authorities' registration of it. In the early 1920s, notions of racial hygiene were firmly rooted in both science and politics. The establishment of the Institute for Racial Biology is one example of this. The Institute was opened in Uppsala in 1922 with broad political backing. This government authority was the first state racial biology institute in the world.<sup>253</sup>

At the beginning of the 20th century, a government committee of inquiry entitled *The Treatment of Degenerate and Morally Neglected Children* took a race-biological attitude to Roma. "Tattare" were regarded as a "scourge" and the measures the commission proposed were to help free the population from this "social evil". Roma were regarded as a group that did not comply with society's laws and was thus both morally and constitutionally corrupt, the commission argued. Roma represented a "fear for the settled, law-abiding population; that men and women mainly live in

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<sup>252</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], pages 9–10. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>253</sup> Broberg, Gunnar (1995), *Statlig rasforskning. En historik över Rasbiologiska institutet* [State racial research. A history of the Institute for Racial Biology], page 11.

concubinage; and that the children grow up without education and Christian discipline”.<sup>254</sup>

The commission believed that one way to free the population from this “social evil” was to separate the children from their parents. However, this was associated with difficulties as “tattare children have, by their very nature a deeply rooted inclination to wander and few homes or institutions are prepared to undertake the upbringing of tattare children”.<sup>255</sup> The commission was of the opinion that “gypsies” were a vagabond people that differed from “tattare” in terms of both appearance and way of life. It was rather troubling that children were not cared for properly and neglected. Children were not taught about Christianity. In addition, the commission argued that the vagrancy legislation was not sufficient to reach adult Roma.<sup>256</sup>

Another example indicating that the ideas of racial hygiene were influential and had broad political support were the marriage barriers introduced into Swedish legislation in 1915. The Marriage Act stipulated that marriage was forbidden for people who had been designated “mentally deranged”, “mentally deficient” or had hereditary epilepsy.<sup>257</sup> In the preparatory works to the Marriage Act, racial hygiene was justified using the threat scenarios of that day:

“Contemporary racial hygiene, eugenics, makes ever greater demands for legislative measures to protect future generations, to maintain and improve the human race. This movement does not intend merely to combat dangers to public health, consisting of phenomena such as emigration, industrialism or the accumulation of the population in the big cities ... It wishes, among other things, to induce members of

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<sup>254</sup> Commission of Inquiry Official Report no. II 1900. Betänkande och förslag angående vanartade och i sedligt afseende försummade barns behandling [Report and proposals concerning the treatment of degenerate and morally neglected children], pages 110–118.

<sup>255</sup> Commission of Inquiry Official Report no. II 1900. Betänkande och förslag angående vanartade och i sedligt afseende försummade barns behandling [Report and proposals concerning the treatment of degenerate and morally neglected children], pages 110–118.

<sup>256</sup> Commission of Inquiry Official Report no. II 1900. Betänkande och förslag angående vanartade och i sedligt afseende försummade barns behandling [Report and proposals concerning the treatment of degenerate and morally neglected children], pages 110–118.

<sup>257</sup> Those who had been designated as “mentally deranged” or “mentally deficient” were not permitted to marry until 1969 and 1973, respectively.

society to work consciously to counter the procreation of the inferior.”<sup>258</sup>

Racial hygiene was thus considered to be modern society's way of dealing with the threat scenarios that were depicted and interpreted in biological terms. The goal of the Marriage Act was to encourage relationships that could result in the refining of the population by means of “capable offspring” without excluding too many.<sup>259</sup> The historian Sheila Weiss asserts that there were three driving forces behind the growth of racial hygiene in Germany at the beginning of the century. Mattias Tydén states that these driving forces are also applicable to Sweden. Partly the social development of industrialism, with its threat scenario of a poor and growing working class and an alleged increase in mental illness and antisocial behaviour, and partly medical professionalisation, with science and the medical profession together devoting themselves to resolving social problems. A further component was evolutionary biology and its Social Darwinist interpretations.<sup>260</sup>

Accordingly, racial hygiene did not emerge in Sweden alone, nor was it a “pseudoscience”; rather it had broad support in many countries and in differing political camps. Politics was in many respects nourished by racial hygiene. In Germany, Nazi racial policies were built on one of the consequences of racial hygiene: individuals were regarded as valuable or inferior. As emphasised by

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<sup>258</sup> Lagberedningens förslag till revision av Giftermålsbalken och vissa delar av ärvdabalken, vol 1, med Förslag till lag om äktenskaps ingående och upplösning m.m. [The Legislation Committee's Proposal for Revision of the Marriage Code and Certain Parts of the Inheritance Code, Vol. 1 with Proposal for an Act concerning Marriage and its Dissolution etc.], page 131. The opportunity to allow a marriage licence only on condition of sterilisation was not set out in law, however, it appears in the preparatory work for an amendment to the Marriage Code in 1945.

<sup>259</sup> Lagberedningens förslag till revision av Giftermålsbalken och vissa delar av ärvdabalken, vol 1. Förslag till lag om äktenskaps ingående och upplösning m.m. [The Legislation Committee's Proposal for Revision of the Marriage Code and Certain Parts of the Inheritance Code, Vol. 1 with Proposal for an Act concerning Marriage and its Dissolution etc.]; Taussi Sjöberg, Maria (1988) Skiljas, trolövnin, äktenskap och skilsmässa i Norrland på 1800-talet [Separation, betrothal, marriage and divorce in Norrland in the 19th century].

<sup>260</sup> Weiss, Sheila (1987), Race Hygiene and National Efficiency: The Eugenics of Wilhelm Schallmayer, pages 7 ff and Tydén, Mattias (2000), Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:20, page 23.

Stéphane Bruchfeld and Paul A. Levine, the individual had no value to the Nazis other than as “a tool of the racist state”.<sup>261</sup>

The political parties that were represented in the Riksdag adopted ideas from racial hygiene. Racial hygienists wanted primarily to draw attention to the population question's qualitative aspects and frequently stressed that there was a connection between heredity and environment. The introduction of welfare was therefore considered to be, in many respects, insufficient to ensure the social development of underprivileged individuals.<sup>262</sup> There were also proposals that aimed to prevent certain groups of people from having children and thus reduce the presumed financial expenditure associated with their existence.

In 1922 a Member of the Riksdag tabled a motion requesting an inquiry into cases where it should be, for social reasons, permitted to sterilise people. The Member tabling this motion believed that a law could provide greater opportunity to intervene against mentally and physically divergent individuals. This could be facilitated if sterilisation was permitted. Doctors would serve society by curing diagnoses made on the basis of individuals' social living conditions and social environments. It was emphasised that sterilisation was a humanitarian measure, both for society as a whole and for the unborn children of sick parents. It was seen as unfavourable for children to grow up with “unfit parents” and supporting such parents or looking after their offspring represented a financial burden for society.<sup>263</sup>

The Second Legislative Committees' considerations concerning the motion show that its position was that the sterilisation

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<sup>261</sup> Bruchfeld, Stéphane and Levine, Paul A. (2010), *Tell Ye Your Children ... A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945 – with a new chapter about Sweden and the Holocaust*. Cf. Mattias Tydén's overview of the sterilisation laws in 14 countries; Germany passed a sterilisation act in 1933, i.e. one year before Sweden introduced the Sterilisation Act. *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:20, pages 38–52.

<sup>262</sup> Hirdman, Yvonne (1989), *Att lägga livet till rätta. Studier i svensk folkhemspolitik* [Putting life in order. Studies of Swedish welfare policy].

<sup>263</sup> First Chamber, Motion no. 38, 1922, by Alfred Petren (Social Democratic Workers Party, SDWP) seconded by A. Björkman (SDWP), Edv. Björnsson (SDWP), William Linder (SDWP), Ivan Pauli (SDWP), Knut Tengdahl (SDWP), Einar J:son Thulin (SDWP), Ernst Wigforss (SDWP), Mauritz Hellberg (Liberal Party, LP), G.H von Koch (LP), Ernst Lyberg (LP), Nils Wohlin (Farmer's Union).



question should be examined, while at the same time it came out in favour of sterilisation interventions. The Committee emphasised public interest as grounds for intervention and gave its support for such a move in cases where a social indication was present. The Committee's opinion maintains that inferior individuals were not of benefit to society and that they were usually supported out of public funds:

“Maintenance and improvement of the human race is naturally a significant national interest. The existence of a large number of physically and mentally inferior individuals is a burden for society in more than one respect. As a rule, such individuals are of no or little benefit to society and must generally be supported at public expense, thus occasioning an appreciable cost to society. Through the supervision and care of which they are often in need, they tie up a great deal of manpower; and they are also in many other ways burdensome and troublesome for those around them ... The various inconveniences that the individuals in question cause society are not confined to their own lifetime, but also apply to subsequent generations.”<sup>264</sup>

Both chambers of the Riksdag approved, by acclamation, the Committee's proposal that the Government should institute an inquiry into sterilisation.<sup>265</sup> Following an inquiry lasting two years, a Sterilisation Act (SOU 1929:14) was proposed. The inquiry presented the idea that the Swedish people were exposed to the danger of degeneration by means of biologically inferior persons being allowed to reproduce:

“From the point of view of society, a significant desire must be to prevent the birth of such individuals who, due to their hereditary characteristics, are predestined to display mental disturbances, perhaps as early as childhood or later in the active phases of life, and who may also pass these unfavourable hereditary characteristics on to their progeny.”<sup>266</sup>

The inquiry proposed that sterilisation could only be performed on a person who had consented to the procedure; neither could anyone be sterilised if they refused or resisted, even if that person

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<sup>264</sup> Opinion of the Second Legislative Committee no. 24, 1922, page 12. No reservations.

<sup>265</sup> Proceedings of the First Chamber no. 42, pages 44–52; Proceedings of the First Chamber no 48, pages 158–159.

<sup>266</sup> SOU 1929:14, Betänkande med förslag till steriliseringslag [Official report with proposal for a sterilisation act], page 7.

had previously consented.<sup>267</sup> It was specifically emphasised that “it is not a question of higher or lower social classes or of richer or poorer” individuals.<sup>268</sup> Nevertheless, the opinion was expressed that there were individuals:

“who, from a hereditary perspective, are well equipped and of whom society is much in need, ... on the other hand, individuals who, from the same perspective, are to be regarded as sick and biologically inferior and concerning whom it is in the interests of society that they are as few in number as possible.”<sup>269</sup>

The opinions of the Institute for Racial Biology, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Inspector of Poor Relief and Child Welfare on the official report express the view that the inquiry's proposal was not sufficiently far-reaching. They were of the opinion that the law should be expanded and list the circumstances under which sterilisation of the legally competent would be permitted.<sup>270</sup>

Five years later, in 1934, the Government presented a sterilisation act that was adopted by the Riksdag. The act specified the situations in which an operation could take place without consent. The basic requirement was that a person “permanently lacks the ability to provide valid consent to the measure”, which was a reference to people who were not legally competent. In addition to this, specific grounds for an operation were required, known as the indications. A *eugenic indication* existed if someone could be presumed to pass on hereditary mental illness or mental deficiency. The definition of a *social indication* was that someone was “incapable of having custody of their children in the future”. In both cases, the indications were associated with “mental disturbance” that, according to the act (and the outlook of the time), were a prerequisite for an operation.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>267</sup> SOU 1929:14, Betänkande med förslag till steriliseringslag [Official report with proposal for a sterilisation act], pages 5 and 7, specifically Section 2.

<sup>268</sup> SOU 1929:14, Betänkande med förslag till steriliseringslag [Official report with proposal for a sterilisation act], page 7.

<sup>269</sup> SOU 1929:14, Betänkande med förslag till steriliseringslag [Official report with proposal for a sterilisation act], page 7.

<sup>270</sup> The opinions are in part given in Govt. Bill no 103, 1934, pages 17, 20 and 21.

<sup>271</sup> Act concerning the sterilisation of certain mentally ill, mentally deficient or otherwise mentally incapacitated persons (SFS 1934:171).

Sterilisation operations covered by the act would be examined by the National Board of Medicine, which was the state medical authority.<sup>272</sup> Each application would be submitted on a specific form with attached evidence, e.g. a doctor's certificate. In cases involving people who had been designated as “mentally deficient”, two doctors in consultation were to make a decision about sterilisation after consent had been obtained from the spouse, parents or guardian.<sup>273</sup>

The Government decided that the sterilisation legislation was to regulate operations on people who lacked the ability to provide valid consent to sterilisation. In addition, the Government was of the opinion that:

“As regards legally competent persons, there is already the opportunity to undertake sterilisation in all such cases where this might accord with the interests of society. The prerequisite is admittedly ... solid reasons of a eugenic, social, humanitarian or penological nature – that the person concerned consents”.<sup>274</sup>

Consequently, such operations were not covered by any legal regulation other than being reported to the National Board of Medicine retrospectively. In the years up to and including 1941, a greater number of sterilisations were carried out on people who were not covered by the legislation.<sup>275</sup>

The Riksdag and the Government's position on the sterilisation question from 1922 to 1934, as reflected in motions tabled in the Riksdag, government bills and statements in the chambers, indicate that sterilisation as a concept or method was not in question. It is not possible to find any party in the Riksdag or any representative of the Government who was doubtful or critical of the legislation that made it possible for individuals to be subjected to sterilisation.

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<sup>272</sup> SFS 1934:171, Section 3.

<sup>273</sup> SFS 1934:171, Section 3.

<sup>274</sup> Govt. Bill 103, 1934.

<sup>275</sup> Tydén, Mattias (2000), *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975, Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22, pages 54 f.

### 3.3.2 Sterilisation with consent

Under the Sterilisation Act of 1934, sterilisation without consent was thus only permitted if a person was not considered capable of what this involved, e.g. because of a mental illness. Several studies on sterilisation show that, during the time the Sterilisation Act was in force, consent could be conditional and pressure and persuasion were used by public authorities and institutions that were often responsible for the wording of the applications.<sup>276</sup>

An investigation of who actually instigated applications for sterilisation in the period 1935–1939 indicates that in the majority of cases it was someone other than the person the application concerned.<sup>277</sup> As stated in previous sections, the work of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief in the 1920s and the National Board of Health and Welfare's statements and actions were clear examples of a desire to solve the “tattare and gypsy question” by means of race-biological methods. The basis of the Committee's work and the Board's activities was registering individual people. The procedures developed by those involved in surveys (police authorities, county administrative boards, child welfare boards, vicars, poor relief boards) and the inspectors also meant that they both reinforced and improved procedures that were based on the notion that Roma were “undesirable” and a burden on society. Furthermore, it was primarily poor relief boards and child welfare boards that were proactive, producing and drawing up applications for sterilisation. The same authorities also had a role in decisions concerning whether children would be taken into care.

The following describes a letter from a child welfare board to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor. The letter shows how the exercise of power, compulsion and voluntariness was expressed in an

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<sup>276</sup> SOU 2000:20, Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935–1975, Historisk belysning – Kartläggning – Intervjuer jämte bilagor. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [The sterilisation question in Sweden 1935–1975. Historical account – survey – interviews and appendices. Final report of the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997].

<sup>277</sup> Tydén, Mattias (2000), Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22, page 347.

application to sterilise a Roma woman from around 1940 and also shows, above all, the circumstances under which an application for sterilisation could be drawn up. The letter is copy of a child welfare board's report to a doctor stating that a person should be sterilised. It was later sent to the National Board of Health and Welfare with a note indicating that it could be used as a template in conjunction with the Board's "tattare inventory" of 1943.

The application for sterilisation had been made by the chair of a child welfare board, who was therefore the formal applicant. Consequently, the initiative to draw up the application was taken by someone other than the person affected by the operation. However, the woman's consent was required, which the board was aware of:

"[H]ereditary characteristics are stronger than the environment. Everything suggests that sterilisation should be carried out, on condition that [name] consents."

The woman's own wishes and attitude to sterilisation had, according to the board, been made clear in a conversation with a child welfare representative and a matron at a maternity hospital, where her third child was born.

"[Name] explained that she would willingly submit to sterilisation."

The board's justification for an operation included both eugenic and social arguments. Her parents' living conditions burdened her and, in this context, spoke against her future parenting ability. The board was of the opinion that the woman came from a "decidedly tattare family", with parents who had "typical tattare occupations", and that they lived an "unregulated and wandering life". "They are not able to work and no employer wants to give them work." The schooling of the woman's siblings was highlighted and also constituted an argument for her sterilisation. The siblings were considered to be "poorly endowed, almost imbeciles", with "an extremely violent and ungovernable temperament". In a statement to the child welfare board, her teacher stated that "there is something wrong with [name]" and that she had a "pugnacious and sulky temperament".

The letter also states that the woman's three children had been taken into care with her consent and placed in foster homes when

they were infants. Poor circumstances and apparent signs of destitution had been interpreted to her disadvantage. The woman's first child has been taken into care, the reason given being that her home was inadequate. The second child had been taken into care because her home was inadequate and the child had no clothes. The third child had been taken into care because the woman could not breastfeed. The board stated that it could not give an opinion on whether “tattare tendencies will assert themselves in the children”. The board concluded the letter with the following summary:

“There exist certain antisocial tendencies in this family, difficulties coping with a civilised society bound by the rule of law. The individuals entering this world under such circumstances will not be of benefit to either themselves or others. Even if these children can be placed in good foster homes, improving their environment, so to speak, one would have every reason to fear that their hereditary characteristics are stronger than the environment. This all suggests that sterilisation should be carried out, on condition that [name] consents.”<sup>278</sup>

The letter makes clear that sterilisation and taking children into care was closely managed by representatives of the municipality and that preconceptions about “tattare” had an impact on measures used against the woman and her children. The mother and children's circumstances, taking into account housing conditions and poverty, were among the reasons for sterilisation. In addition, the reasons that gave rise to the letter are defined by someone other than the person the application concerns. The woman is described, assessed and categorised. She is deprived of the opportunity to make her voice heard. Decisions and descriptions concerning her and her family were collated by the child welfare board, teachers and maternity hospitals. The letter also indicates that the right to “voluntary” sterilisation could, in practice, involve the individual being induced, using persuasion and pressure, to surrender to society's interests in terms of population quality.

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<sup>278</sup> “Letter from Child Welfare Board ... to the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor, 23 November 1942, National Board of Health and Welfare's archive, 5th Bureau, H 10:6, National Archives.

### 3.3.3 The Sterilisation Act of 1941

When the Riksdag adopted the Sterilisation Act of 1934, it also called for a new inquiry to examine the case for wider regulation of sterilisation.<sup>279</sup> The following year, this issue was handed to the Population Commission, which was appointed by the Riksdag.

The 1930s can be characterised as a period in which social policy was being built up, and the basis of this had, in many respects, been formulated by the Population Commission. The Commission was appointed in 1935 and, from then until 1938, presented 16 inquiry reports. Measures to reduce the birth rate, which at that time was regarded as a population crisis, were high on the political agenda. The Commission stressed that more people were needed, but the recurring question was what sort of people society required.<sup>280</sup>

The Commission's official reports, which aimed to set guidelines for future population policy, emphasised the need for industrial expansion. There was also an emphasis on support and social policy reforms such as home loans and mothers' assistance.<sup>281</sup>

In addition, measures were proposed that promoted marital fecundity "in all hereditarily valuable sections of the population" and preventative birth control among groups that:

"from the perspective of hereditary hygiene can be designated as inferior and, with respect to more severely defective individuals, it should be possible to go further and destroy their ability to procreate by means of sterilisation".<sup>282</sup>

<sup>279</sup> The Riksdag's communication to the Government of 8 May 1934 (no. 228) proposed an inquiry and proposals concerning voluntary sterilisation of legally competent persons.

<sup>280</sup> Hatje, Ann-Katrin (1974), *Befolkningsfrågan och välfärden. Debatten om familjepolitik och nativitetsökning under 1930- och 1940-talen* [The population question and welfare. The debate on family policy and increasing birth rate in the 1930s and 1940s].

<sup>281</sup> At this point, much has been published on the 1930s population debate, and it is not possible to present this in detail. Those wishing to read more may consult, e.g. Ann-Katrin Hatje (1974), *Befolkningsfrågan och välfärden. Debatten om familjepolitik och nativitetsökning under 1930- och 1940-talen* [The population question and welfare. The debate on family policy and increasing birth rate in the 1930s and 1940s]; Hirdman, Yvonne (1989), *Att lägga livet till rätta. Studier i svensk folkhemspolitik* [Putting life in order. Studies of Swedish welfare policy]; Tydén, Mattias (2000), *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22.

<sup>282</sup> SOU 1938:57, *Slutbetänkande av befolkningskommissionen* [Final report of the Population Commission], pages 107 f. Cf. Hirdman, Yvonne (1989) *Att lägga livet till rätta. Studier i folkhemspolitik* [Putting life in order. Studies of Swedish welfare policy], which describes the work of the Population Commission.

The Commission presented an inquiry report that gradually, with certain adjustments, led to the Sterilisation Act of 1941.<sup>283</sup> The Population Commission believed, as did many in the society at large, that sterilisation had a role to play in a population and social policy context. The historian Anders Berge shows that social policy, at least up into the 1940s, was not universal; rather it excluded certain groups. Two clear examples of this can be found in the pension system and voting regulations at that time. According to the pension reforms of 1935, people who permanently received funds from the poor relief system were excluded from the public pension system and did not get the right to vote until 1945. The following year, 1946, the rule forbidding pensions for those in permanent receipt of poor relief was removed.<sup>284</sup> Mattias Tydén argues that the sterilisation question was one part of a general approach that divided the population into categories and identified which groups in society were to be given access to socio-political reforms.<sup>285</sup> In 1934, the book *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* [Crisis in the Population Question] was published; this presented sterilisation as one of many methods of creating a better society. Sterilisation fulfilled a role in a population policy that emphasised measures for solving social problems and aimed to introduce social reforms.<sup>286</sup> This book has been identified, both in its own time and by subsequent research, as the beginning of the social and population policy debate that drove Swedish social policy.

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<sup>283</sup> Two further official reports from the Commission dealt with the sterilisation question: SOU 1936:59, *Betänkande i sexualfrågan* [Official report on the sexual question] and SOU 1938:57, *Slutbetänkande av befolkningskommissionen* [Final report of the Population Commission], page 62 of which argues that a greater use of sterilisation for both hereditary hygiene and social reasons was “a highly desirable aspect of a positive Swedish population policy”.

<sup>284</sup> Berge, Anders (1996), *Medborgarrätt och egenansvar. De sociala försäkringarna i Sverige 1901–1935* [Civil rights and personal responsibility. The social insurance systems in Sweden 1901–1935], pages 25–28; Tydén, Mattias (2000), *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22, page 128.

<sup>285</sup> Tydén, Mattias (2000), *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975, Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], SOU 2000:22.

<sup>286</sup> Myrdal, Alva & Gunnar Myrdal (1934), *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* [Crisis in the Population Question].



With respect to vagabonds, who were often identified as synonymous with “tattare”, the Population Commission pointed out that an important goal was to even out the number of children born between different demographic strata in society. Sterilising a greater number of people was desirable “to the greatest possible extent”. The Commission had the following justification for its position:

“Inferior women of the antisocial types in question often have, as evidenced by experience, a remarkably high number of children. ... As individuals such as those now in question generally are unable to take care of their children, their sterilisation is entirely consistent with the spirit of the current legislation ...

On first reflection it may appear more doubtful whether sterilising people who belong to the category in question is desirable from a general eugenic perspective. In certain cases, inferiority is without doubt ... to some extent determined by unfavourable circumstances. Although it is impossible to present definitive figures, it is however beyond all doubt that this group of unquestionably intellectually, morally and otherwise socially inferior people as are now in question, on average, constitutes significantly worse hereditary material than the population in general. Consequently, preventing such people from procreating must, generally speaking, lead to a significant improvement in the population. Such an improvement cannot be expected to be fast, but its value must not therefore be underestimated. A more thorough consideration thus leads to the conclusion that sterilisation of an existing inferior group is not merely justified, but is rather important from a eugenic perspective.”<sup>287</sup>

The Commission also justified the introduction of sterilisation on economic grounds, arguing that children who would be a burden on the central and local governments throughout their entire lives should not be brought into the world.<sup>288</sup> Accordingly, the Commission recommended a system of conditional welfare:

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<sup>287</sup> SOU 1936:46, Betänkande angående sterilisering [Official report concerning sterilisation], pages 27 f.

<sup>288</sup> SOU 1936:46, Betänkande angående sterilisering [Official report concerning sterilisation], page 15 and SOU 1938:57, Slutbetänkande avgivet av Befolkningskommissionen [Final report of the Population Commission], page 62.

“Assistance needs to be complemented by a certain amount of sterilisation when the type and degree of inferiority justifies the use of this measure”.<sup>289</sup>

In 1941 the Riksdag adopted the Sterilisation Act to replace the Act of 1934. This also covered legally competent persons who gave their consent. The social indication was expanded to cover the term “antisocial ways of life”. Another change was – according to the contemporary view – that the “mentally disturbed” or “antisocial” did not need to be “incapable” of caring for their children, rather that they were “manifestly unsuitable” to look after children. A medical indication was introduced that applied to women in situations where pregnancy would endanger their life or health.

The definition of legal incapacity was also expanded as the requirement for permanent inability to give consent was replaced by inability alone. A certifying doctor was no longer required to demonstrate the probability that the person to be sterilised was to be regarded as legally incompetent.

However, it was still the case that legal capacity was a basic requirement for sterilisation without consent. This means that the Sterilisation Act of 1941 prohibited the sterilisation of a person without consent for purely social or medical reasons. These and other reasons needed to be combined with a “mental disturbance” and legal incapacity in order to constitute grounds for an operation without consent.

All operations would be examined by the National Board of Medicine following a specific application procedure.<sup>290</sup> The regime whereby two doctors could themselves decide on sterilisations was abolished. In cases involving medical indications, the patient's consent and a consultation with two doctors was required.

The Riksdag debate in 1941 expressed support for the inclusion of the social indication in the Government's proposal for a Sterilisation Act. One Member of the Riksdag stated that:

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<sup>289</sup> SOU 1936:46, Betänkande angående sterilisering [Official report concerning sterilisation], page 16.

<sup>290</sup> The National Board of Medicine was the government authority that regulated the Swedish healthcare system until 1967. The following year, the National Board of Medicine was merged with the National Board of Health and Welfare to form a joint authority called the National Board of Health and Welfare.

“I am not unfamiliar with ... the fact that the population question is in an extremely unfavourable position and this legislation may, of course, not be discussed without also taking into account the population question. However, even though I warmly welcome every measure that may foster population growth, I have not been able to understand why society, with the aim of raising the birth rate, allows people to populate the country, regardless of their quality. ... Antisocial ways of life often have some connection with mental disturbances. Here, I am thinking of alcoholics, vagrants, tattare and recidivists ... I do not understand why these people should be permitted to bring children into the world. In most of the larger municipalities, these antisocial types are recognisable, sponging on society for generation after generation.”<sup>291</sup>

Another Member of the Riksdag also welcomed the proposal that antisocial ways of life be deemed a separate indication, as these people were considered to:

“[b]urden the public budget, to the inevitable detriment of the population's superior material.”<sup>292</sup>

This Member of the Riksdag emphasised the Sterilisation Act's long-term impact and the reasons why it should be expanded:

“Are we not obliged to help ensure, as far as possible, that children with excessively inferior hereditary characteristics are not born, especially given that the environment of antisocial elements, in which they will be spending their childhood, lacks all the prerequisites to provide them with the conditions for a harmonious and happy development, which every child has the right to demand?”<sup>293</sup>

Yet another Member of the Riksdag underlined the “danger” of “undesirable human material” procreating “unchecked” and sponging on society, while at the same time society could not afford to provide support to those who presented the country with desirable children.<sup>294</sup>

Another Member of the Riksdag called for police assistance and compulsory sterilisation in order to make the Act more efficient

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<sup>291</sup> Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 25, 1941, Verner Vilhelm Hedlund (Social Democratic Workers Party), page 43.

<sup>292</sup> Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 25, 1941, Hildur Kristina Nygren (Social Democratic Workers Party).

<sup>293</sup> Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 24, 1941, Hildur Kristina Nygren (Social Democratic Workers Party).

<sup>294</sup> Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 25, 1941, page 44.

and was also of the opinion that it was more brutal to use the police to take a woman's child from her than to use compulsory measures to deprive her of the opportunity to become a mother.<sup>295</sup>

In the Riksdag debate, the Minister of Justice stressed the Government's desire to expand the social indication in order to prevent social problems, using "decontamination". The Minister stated that this expansion represented:

"a significant step forward towards the goal of decontaminating the Swedish stock, freeing it from the propagation of hereditary characteristics that lead to future generations containing individuals who are not desirable members of a sound and healthy nation."<sup>296</sup>

In a statement about involuntary sterilisations to the Riksdag in 1943, the National Board of Medicine's genetic biologist argued that "a more effective application of the Sterilisation Act is, without doubt, desirable and possible".<sup>297</sup>

This review of the Riksdag's consideration of the sterilisation question demonstrates that it contained both hereditary-hygienic and moral arguments for a wider application of the Sterilisation Act and for a practical preventative social policy. In addition, it is clear that there was unity in the Riksdag concerning the introduction of the Sterilisation Act of 1941. Contentious issues included how the social indication would be worded, the scope of this indication and who would make decisions concerning sterilisation.<sup>298</sup>

### 3.4 Links between mothers' assistance and sterilisation

The National Board of Health and Welfare was one of the parties involved in pursuing the line that the social indication should be expanded to cover legally competent persons. In an opinion

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<sup>295</sup> Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 25, 1941, page 45. The motion was rejected.

<sup>296</sup> Minister of Justice Karl Gustav Westman, Proceedings of the Second Chamber, No 25, 1941, page 48.

<sup>297</sup> Riksdag Publications 1943, Opinion of the First Legislative Committee no. 41.

<sup>298</sup> Opinion of the First Legislative Committee no. 31, 1941; Proceedings of the First Chamber no. 24, 1941, pages 24–29; Proceedings of the Second Chamber no. 25, pages 41–58.

published by the Board in 1940 regarding an inquiry proposal concerning work training, it emphasised that the Sterilisation Act should be expanded and also called for a better application of the sterilisation regulations already in force because “every instance of procreation by this clientele is undesirable and should therefore be prevented to the extent possible”.<sup>299</sup> The Board also stated that “tattare” constituted an inferior group in society.

“Measures that aim to achieve social adjustment of these individuals are usually futile because their relationship to other people is greatly determined by their family mentality and they often lack the psychological prerequisites for adjustment to current moral and behavioural norms. Without exception, they constitute a burden on Swedish society, both biologically and socially. As they are often extremely fertile and commonly display one or more of the indications for sterilisation, as listed in the Sterilisation Act, it is vital that this Act be applied consistently on these worrying, socially unadaptable and significantly dangerous elements.”<sup>300</sup>

That same year, 1940, the Riksdag authorised the Board, as the regulatory authority for maternal care and child welfare boards, to draw up uniform guidelines for maternal care. Preventative maternal care and child welfare services were being set up, and the aim of this assignment was to produce uniform guidelines for the practical work.<sup>301</sup> According to the law, those eligible to apply for mothers' assistance were:

“Women, who because of pregnancy or childbirth are clearly in need of support, are granted mothers' assistance from state funds, unless otherwise stipulated below.”<sup>302</sup>

The Board produced a handbook that initially emphasised the significance of mothers' assistance from a healthcare perspective. Mothers' assistance aimed to improve the situation for mothers and children. It was a form of assistance that was means-tested and paid

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<sup>299</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1940), Health and welfare communication 1940:10B, p. 8.

<sup>300</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1940), Health and welfare communication 1940:10B, pages 806 f.

<sup>301</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1942) Handbok för mödrahjälpverksamheten, med råd och anvisningar av Kungl. Socialstyrelsen [Handbook for mothers' assistance, with advice and instructions from the Royal National Board of Health and Welfare], Preface.

<sup>302</sup> His Royal Highness' Ordinance of 11 June 1937 concerning Mothers' Assistance, no. 339/1937.

in kind and would be granted to women who, “because of pregnancy or childbirth are clearly in need of support”,<sup>303</sup> The Board's handbook emphasised that mothers' assistance was conditional. When making an assessment, the Board would take into account whether the granting of mothers' assistance could result in “the continued production of undesirable children”.

Following consultation with the National Board of Medicine, the two public authorities came to an agreement on which groups would not be granted mothers' assistance and this was specified in the handbook as follows:<sup>304</sup>

“Gypsies and tattare who pursue a typical nomadic life will often also be classified among the environmentally antisocial and should then not be granted mothers' assistance. A separate report concerning antisocial behaviour should therefore be presented.”<sup>305</sup>

The handbook stresses that “sterilisation is often the only way of avoiding future complicated assistance requirements” and that child welfare and mothers' assistance boards had a particular responsibility to actively contribute to sterilisation investigations. In addition the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that persuasion and personal collaboration between public sector bodies and doctors was necessary if undesirable groups were to be sterilised and not receive maternal care.<sup>306</sup> The handbook also presents detailed justification for the expansion of the Sterilisation Act of 1941 to cover operations on persons considered “mentally deficient” or who were regarded as having an “antisocial way of life”.<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> His Royal Highness' Ordinance of 11 June 1937 concerning Mothers' Assistance, no. 339/1937.

<sup>304</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1942) *Handbok för mödrhjälpssverksamheten, med råd och anvisningar av Kungl. Socialstyrelsen* [Handbook for mothers' assistance, with advice and instructions from the Royal National Board of Health and Welfare], page 23.

<sup>305</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1942) *Handbok för mödrhjälpssverksamheten, med råd och anvisningar av Kungl. Socialstyrelsen* [Handbook for mothers' assistance, with advice and instructions from the Royal National Board of Health and Welfare], page 24.

<sup>306</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1942) *Handbok för mödrhjälpssverksamheten, med råd och anvisningar av Kungl. Socialstyrelsen* [Handbook for mothers' assistance, with advice and instructions from the Royal National Board of Health and Welfare], page 24.

<sup>307</sup> National Board of Health and Welfare (1942) *Handbok för mödrhjälpssverksamheten, med råd och anvisningar av Kungl. Socialstyrelsen* [Handbook for mothers' assistance, with advice and instructions from the Royal National Board of Health and Welfare], pages 107–

This means that the Board produced a handbook stipulating that Roma, because they were Roma, would not have a right to mothers' assistance and should mothers' assistance be discussed, it would only be granted on the condition of sterilisation. At the end of the 1940s, the Swedish social dictionary, whose editor was also the Director-General of the National Board of Health and Welfare, reiterated that mothers' assistance was not unconditional for all mothers and that it was linked to sterilisation:

“Mothers' assistance must not be a continued encouragement to the birth of undesirable procreation ... Therefore, there may be good reason, in conjunction with mothers' assistance, to investigate whether sterilisation should be performed”.<sup>308</sup>

De los Reyes' review of sterilisation files indicates that sterilisation was also stipulated in practice as a condition of Roma being granted mothers' assistance. One application for sterilisation from a child welfare inspector concerns a 28-year-old woman. It indicates that the poverty of her living and housing conditions, along with the woman's ethnicity, justified mothers' assistance being made conditional on sterilisation.

“The applicants – the husband as well – are from a tattare family and still lead a wandering life. ... The family have the bare minimum of household possessions, which are extremely shabby. The home is untidy. Under these unsettled circumstances, this couple would never be able to give their children a home in the real sense of the word. It cannot be considered desirable for further children to be born into this home. The family will always be the subject of poor relief of different kinds. Mothers' assistance has been granted for the youngest child on condition that a sterilising operation be performed.”<sup>309</sup>

The National Board of Medicine approved the application for sterilisation on both eugenic and social indications, which can be deduced from the doctor's opinion that formed the basis of the decision:

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114 and 123–138, which reproduce the Sterilisation Act of 1941 and the regulations concerning its application.

<sup>308</sup> Svenskt socialt lexikon [Swedish social dictionary] (1949), Artikel om mödrahjälp [Article about mothers' assistance].

<sup>309</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), Romska och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

“Appears to know what she wants, but has to understand that she must control her mind. Displays no temper, is quite curt, has an abrupt manner. Does not appear particularly unintelligent, but completely uninterested in anything else that affects herself and her family. Is candid and finds it easy to express herself. ... She appears to me to be completely capable of assessing what a sterilising operation involves. No psychotic symptoms. The patient is an untrustworthy, relatively unintelligent psychopath who has a labile affect and is of a vagabond type with unmistakable tattare characteristics.”<sup>310</sup>

The circumstances that burdened the 28-year-old woman and constituted the grounds for her sterilisation also appear to have been expressed in another application approved by the National Board of Medicine for the sterilisation of a 31-year-old woman.

“This [family] has tattare heritage on both sides ... and inhabits a dark and dreary flat with two rooms and a kitchen in the building at [address]. Ever since their arrival in town, the family has been in receipt of poor relief and the school-age children have been clothed entirely by the school assistance programme and have been fed free of charge in school. Mothers' assistance has also been awarded on various occasions. When the latest child was born, mothers' assistance was offered on condition that the mother submit to sterilisation. However, she refused to go through with this and was instead rude to the public official.”<sup>311</sup>

The woman's explicit refusal to allow herself to be subjected to sterilisation made no impression on the official who dealt with the application. The National Board of Medicine approved the application for sterilisation on eugenic and social indications.

### 3.5 Sterilisation of Roma

As noted above, it was primarily poor relief and child welfare boards that initiated and composed applications for sterilisation.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>310</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 24. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>311</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 24. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>312</sup> Runcis, Maja (1998), *Steriliseringar i folkhemmet* [Sterilisation in the Swedish welfare state], page 223.



This is confirmed by Paulina de los Reyes' examination of the sterilisation files from the mid-1940s. Her study provides a picture of how the Acts were put into practice over the course of a specific period. One conclusion is that the right to “voluntary” sterilisation was mainly a demand from a society in which individuals were expected to subordinate themselves to society's interests in terms of population quality. Her review of these files indicates that the application of the sterilisation acts and the Child Welfare Act touched on many of the same points. Parents whose children had been taken from them were powerless when faced with potential sterilisation, and what many of the women in the files have in common is that they have experience of being taken into care during their childhood or have themselves had children taken into care.

One application for the sterilisation of a 31-year-old woman indicates that the Child Welfare Board had conducted an investigation, not just about her, but also about her close relatives, six of whose children had been taken into care.

“Of the siblings, the sisters are known to the Child Welfare Board, one is married to a brother of the patient's husband, who is an alcoholic and currently an inmate at Svartsjö, their three children have been taken into care and the sister lives immorally. The other sister's home is being monitored by the Child Welfare Board. Three of her children have been taken into protective upbringing because of the poor conditions at home.”<sup>313</sup>

It appears from the application that one of her seven children had been taken into ‘protective upbringing’. The application states that sterilising this woman was justified given the number of children in the family that had already been taken into care and the presumption that the woman did not have the right prerequisites to “bring up her children to be socially competent citizens”.<sup>314</sup>

De los Reyes points out in her study that a large number of sterilisation applications indicate that many of the people local

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<sup>313</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 18. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>314</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 18. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

authorities considered should be subjected to sterilisation also had life-long experience of children being taken into care. Contact with the local authorities had often comprised various types of interventional decisions by the authorities for long periods prior to submission of the sterilisation application.<sup>315</sup> In addition, de los Reyes argues that it is possible to establish from many applications that both the application for sterilisation and the operation itself took place against the will of the person concerned. This circumstance appears clearly in applications concerning people who were inmates of various institutions at the time of application.

One application concerned a 19-year-old man who was an inmate of an institution for the mentally deficient. The National Board of Medicine, in its examination of whether sterilisation should be approved, had requested an affidavit from the parents. The doctor's response stated that the parents would probably not consent to sterilisation:

“I have reminded the patient's parents, but they refuse to send the lawyer ... and make a fuss ... in every way. The mother was here in my office yesterday and screamed so loudly it was heard in the whole [hard to read] that her son was going to be sterilised. 'Because there is nothing wrong with him'. Presumably the parents will not send in any app. 1. The lawyer would prefer not to have anything to do with them.”<sup>316</sup>

The National Board of Medicine's examination contains an appendix describing the 19-year-old's parents. The parents' negative attitude towards their son being in the institution and towards there being far-reaching plans to subject him to sterilisation was interpreted to their and their son's disadvantage. Similarly, the examination reveals that miserable housing conditions and what could be interpreted as harassment by neighbours came to constitute important information for the examination of whether the man would be sterilised:

<sup>315</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 17. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>316</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 21. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

“According to information, the parents are backward, psychopathic and dangerous, from a tattare family. The mother has visited the hospital and she behaved very strangely and was hysterical ... The patient has grown up in a home where everything appears to be dilapidated and neglected. The parents have constantly quarrelled with each other ... The neighbours appear to have a predilection for teasing and being a nuisance to the patient which, along with the miserable home environment, contributed to the patient's aggressive behaviour. The patient appears to have always been intellectually retarded, otherwise nothing listed under c) has been established.”<sup>317</sup>

De los Reyes argues that what is indicated by point “c” in this quotation is the presence of such things as serious diseases or addiction.

None of this is observed under point “c”. However, it is clear that the 19-year-old's resistance to sterilisation is interpreted to his disadvantage:

“[He] leaves an impression of being rather backward ... His judgement [hard to read], cannot understand what the benefit of sterilisation will be and absolutely refuses to submit to such an operation.”<sup>318</sup>

Neither the 19-year-old's refusal to accept the operation nor that of his parents had an impact on the National Board of Medicine's decision to approve sterilisation, which was justified on eugenic (“mental deficiency”) and social (“mental deficiency” and “antisocial way of life”) indications. Antisocial way of life was equated in the decision with “aggressive behaviour”.<sup>319</sup> According to a note in the journal however, the operation was not conducted as the 19-year-old refused to be subjected to it.<sup>320</sup>

De los Reyes has found files showing that neither the refusal of the persons concerned nor that of their parents succeeded in

<sup>317</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 21. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>318</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 22. Ref.no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>319</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 22. Ref.no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>320</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 22. Ref.no. A2013/1174/DISK.

preventing an operation. One such case concerns a 17-year-old boy who was an inmate at a reform school, with the application having been composed by the school warden. The boy was sterilised without having given his consent. The application for sterilisation contains information on the boy's long periods in care, on his hereditary- hygienic diagnosis and on his mother:

“The mother, at least, is from a tattare family ... Because of poor conditions at home and the mother's dissolute way of life, all the children have been taken into social care and protective upbringing. Has been sent to various homes, but has found it hard to adapt and for this reason has been admitted to approved school ... Because of his intellectual deficiency he was transferred from there to [reform school]. Possesses the mental qualities characteristic of a tattare. Has attended the school for the mentally deficient with relatively good results ... The low level of intelligence is partly hidden by his ability to talk and make up stories. Spineless character and lacks perseverance. Fairly well-defined tattare type ... appears closed and reasonably inaccessible, gives the impression of not being interested in his surroundings, but, despite that, observes them closely. Is also slow to comprehend and has a poor memory. His judgement is similarly impaired.”<sup>321</sup>

A letter from the mother to the National Board of Medicine indicates that she was faced with a fait accompli and wanted to induce the National Board of Medicine to give an explanation for the operation:

“With these words I, a heartbroken mother, turn to you because one of my sons ... has been sterilised. He is an inmate of the government reform school. This has taken place without my or my husband's knowledge or permission. One might ask whose son he really is. That such a thing should take place as if they were born at the school and not born of their mother. Honourable gentlemen of the National Board of Medicine. I request an explanation. This is a great affront to me. He does not have a criminal personality.”<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 23. Ref.no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>322</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 22. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

According to the trial records found in the application, the parents had been deemed unsuitable to have custody of their four children following their divorce. This was why a special guardian, and not the parents, had approved the application for an operation.<sup>323</sup>

The National Board of Medicine approved the operation on eugenic and social indications. The social indication cited both “mental deficiency” and “antisocial way of life”. De los Reyes argues that a detailed description of the mother's background may have underpinned the social indication's stress on “heredity”. Similarly, de los Reyes is also of the opinion that the references to mental qualities that characterise “tattare” or a “well-defined tattare type” reinforced the argument “whose premises are that social behaviour is not only something that can be determined from someone's appearance, but is also predestined to be transmitted from generation to generation”.<sup>324</sup>

In conjunction with an application for sterilisation, the doctor was also obliged to perform an intelligence test. The test was the doctor's tool for establishing intellectual age and thus legal capacity. As part of the Sterilisation Inquiry, the intelligence tests were criticised because they measured something other than intelligence.<sup>325</sup> Wählen's intelligence test, which was much used in the mid-1940s, contained questions such as: “What has the most value – good arm strength, good health or a beautiful face?” “What has the most value – doing a good deed, thinking you shall do a good deed or saying that you shall do a good deed?” “What shall you do before undertaking an important task – shall you wash yourself, think it over or give something to the poor?” The Sterilisation Inquiry also discusses the risk of people who were tested scoring too low.<sup>326</sup> De los Reyes states that the files she

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<sup>323</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 23. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>324</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], pages 23–24. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>325</sup> SOU 2000:20, *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], Appendix 4.

<sup>326</sup> SOU 2000:20, *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975. Rapport till 1997 års steriliseringsutredning* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975, Report for the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997], page 193; De los Reyes, Paulina (2013), *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten*

examined contain many examples whereby incomplete schooling, combined with low scores in intelligence tests, have led to those concerned being labelled “mentally deficient”, which has been cited as grounds for their sterilisation. The perception that one of the reasons why people have not completed their schooling is that they lived a “vagabond life” can be deduced from these files. Other reasons are that the people in question left school in accordance with what is known as Section 48 or had attended remedial class.<sup>327</sup> A distinctive feature is that the school situation is described in many sterilisation applications as a problem, not just for those the applications concern, but also for other members of their family. One file concerning an application for sterilisation of a 31-year-old woman states that her son is not wanted in school:

“He must now be completely forbidden from going to school as he is a dangerous source of infection. His appearance in town in recent years has also acquired an increasingly 'scandalous nature'.”<sup>328</sup>

De los Reyes describes a file showing that characteristics such as a good memory for figures and verbal ability were linked to qualities regarded as common “among persons from tattare families” and therefore “not reflecting any great intellectual development”. The file concerns a 20-year-old woman who had good grades in school. Despite this, “mental deficiency” was one of the grounds for sterilisation being approved.<sup>329</sup>

A 30-year-old woman admitted to hospital is described not simply on the basis of her intellectual performance, but also on other assumptions by the informant:

“Because of the poverty of the parental home, early placement with strangers. Is considered untalented in school and had to finish in the fifth year in accordance with Section 48 of the Folk School

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av 1940-talet [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 13. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. the White Paper's chapter on Roma access to education which describes what Section 48 of the Folk School Regulations involves.

<sup>328</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013) *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 14. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>329</sup> De los Reyes, Paulina (2013) *Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet* [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 15. Ref. no. A2013/1174/DISK.

Regulations. Is not confirmed because she must support herself ... The patient appears affected, posing, fake and dishonest and makes an arrogant, untrustworthy impression. She attempts in every way to arrange things to suit herself, but her quibbling suffers from a profound lack of logical coherence; however, she does not realise this and it is barely possible to make her aware of it. Her attitude to society is aggressive, unsympathetic and clearly antisocial. She makes a childish, primitive impression. Her conversation is superficial and formulaic and bears witness to a poor grasp of logic. Her expressions of emotion are exaggerated, but empty and hollow... Imbecilic psychopath with severe deficiencies in terms of desire and emotions.”<sup>330</sup>

### 3.6 Criticism of the sterilisation acts?

The review of the sterilisation acts' inception shows that they were legislated in political unity. Consequently, no resistance to their introduction and aims is in evidence. It has not been possible to find any discussion in bills or Riksdag publications about potential misuse, or instances of undue coercion exercised against certain persons. Nor did the Parliamentary Ombudsman's (JO) criticism in 1947 of how the sterilisation acts were applied lead to the legislation being reconsidered.

The background to the JO's criticism was that it had received complaints from people who had been offered a choice between sterilisation or continued incarceration in institutions and psychiatric hospitals. In a communication to the Government, the JO presented both an analysis of the legislation and cases showing that almost all those who were incarcerated in certain institutions and psychiatric hospitals were given this choice. The JO argued that it was not consistent with the law's principle of voluntariness that praxis had developed whereby sterilisation was a condition of release from institutions and psychiatric hospitals.<sup>331</sup> Having been reproduced in the JO's official report, this communication was

<sup>330</sup> Quotation from de los Reyes, Paulina (2013) Romsk och resandetillhörighet i ansökningar om sterilisering i mitten av 1940-talet [Roma and Traveller affiliation in applications for sterilisation in the mid-1940s], page 14. Ref.no. A2013/1174/DISK.

<sup>331</sup> JO (1947) Framställning angående spörsmålet huruvida utskrivning eller permission från sinnessjukhus eller annan anstalt må förbindas med villkor om sterilisering m.m. [Statement concerning the question of whether release or leave from psychiatric hospitals or other institutions may be attached to the condition of sterilisation etc.], the Parliamentary Ombudsman's official report submitted to the ordinary session of the Riksdag 1947.

placed on the Riksdag's agenda. In the ensuing debate in the Riksdag in 1947, the Riksdag defended both the legislation and its application and stated that it was both appropriate and legal.<sup>332</sup> The Ministry of Justice referred the JO's communication for consideration. The responses make it clear that only the three government authorities that had themselves initiated the drive to expand the scope of sterilisation considered the conditions for sterilisation to be desirable and lawful: the National Board of Mental Health, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Board of Medicine. These were the state agencies that enforced the sterilisation legislation and the public authorities that both developed and maintained praxis in this area. Other referral bodies stressed the need for an inquiry and amendments to the legislation.<sup>333</sup>

In 1955, just over ten years after the JO's communication, a motion was tabled in both chambers of the Riksdag proposing a review of the Sterilisation Act. The motion contains no trace of criticism against the inception or application of the Act. Instead, the aim of this motion was to seek an expansion of the Act and an amendment to ease the situation of women and increase their chances of being able to decide about the operation themselves.<sup>334</sup> The motion was rejected.<sup>335</sup> The same demands were raised in motions five years later, but were rejected by the Riksdag.<sup>336</sup> A

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<sup>332</sup> Opinion of the First Legislative Committee 1947, no. 1; Proceedings of the Second Chamber 1947, no.7; Proceedings of the Second Chamber 1947, no. 25.

<sup>333</sup> This account of the referral statements is taken from Matias Tydén's report to the Sterilisation Inquiry of 1997, *Från politik till praktik. De svenska steriliseringslagarna 1935–1975* [From policy to practice. The Swedish sterilisation laws 1935–1975], SOU 2000:22, pages 271–272.

<sup>334</sup> First Chamber Motion, no. 77, 1955 by Annie Wallentheim (Social Democratic Workers Party, SDWP), Per Bergman (SDWP), Ingeborg Carlqvist (SDWP), Nancy Ericsson (SDWP), Anna Lisa Lewén (SDWP), Georg Pettersson (SDWP), Dagmar Ranmark (SDWP), Anna Sjöström Bengtsson (SDWP), Tekla Torbrink (SDWP) and Gerda Svensson (Farmers' Union), Second Chamber Motion, no. 97 (identical), 1955.

<sup>335</sup> The First Legislative Committee recommended that the motion be rejected, with three reservations for the motion, Opinion of the First Legislative Committee no. 23, 1955. Both chambers approved the Committee's recommendation and rejected the reservations and the motions by acclamation, Minutes of the First Chamber no.14, pages 55–59, 1955, Minutes of the Second Chamber no. 14, pages 72–82.

<sup>336</sup> First Chamber Motion no. 309, 1960 by Olof Palme (SDWP) and Elisabeth Sjövall (SDWP); Second Chamber Motion no. 385, 1960 (identical). The First Legislative Committee recommended that the motion be rejected, with six reservations for the motion, Opinion of the First Legislative Committee no. 24, 1960; the Riksdag approved the



further ten years later, in 1970, a motion requested a review of the Sterilisation Act. The Riksdag approved the motion and requested a review of the Sterilisation Act.<sup>337</sup>

Following an inquiry and government preparation, a new sterilisation act was introduced in 1975. The then Minister of Justice emphasised in the 1975 Sterilisation Bill that the current Sterilisation Act was based on “completely different values and circumstances to those currently prevalent in modern society”.<sup>338</sup> However, neither the official report containing proposals concerning unrestricted sterilisation, the Government's legislative proposal nor the Riksdag's reading of the proposal express an awareness or knowledge of the fact that people had been subjected to the impropriety and violations that the Sterilisation Act had contributed to. In addition, there was no repudiation of what the central and local government authorities had done with the support of the Sterilisation Act.<sup>339</sup> The state's moral responsibility for earlier impropriety and the idea of apologising and compensating people who were sterilised against their will following unwarranted coercion only began featuring in the debate and government committees of inquiry in the 1990s.

### 3.7 Concluding remarks

Swedish law provided the opportunity for sterilisation to be practised in the interests of society up until the mid-1970s. What many of those who were interviewed have in common is that they

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Committee's recommendation to reject the motion, Minutes of the First Chamber no. 13, pages 26–34, 1960, Minutes of the Second Chamber no. 13, pages 69–79, 1960.

<sup>337</sup> First Chamber motion no. 509, 1970 by Annie Wallentheim (SDWP), Frida Berglund (SDWP), Iris Ekroth (SDWP), Nancy Ekroth (SDWP), Tage Hansson (SDWP), Torsten Hansson (SDWP), Maj-Lis Landberg (SDWP), Lisa Mattson (SDWP), Yngve Nyquist (SDWP), Erik Olsson (SDWP), Sture Palm (SDWP), Georg Pettersson (SDWP) and V. Wikner (SDWP). The First Legislative Committee proposed approving the motion. No reservations. Opinion of the First Legislative Committee no. 60, 1970. Both chambers approved the Committee's proposal by acclamation, Proceedings of the First Chamber no. 35, pages 42–43, Proceedings of the Second Chamber no. 35, page 61, 1970.

<sup>338</sup> Minister of Justice Lennart Geijer, Government Bill 1975:18, page 54.

<sup>339</sup> SOU 1974:25, Fri sterilisering. Betänkande av steriliseringsutredningen [Unrestricted sterilisation. Official report of the Sterilisation Inquiry], page 9. Government Bill 1975:18, Förslag till ny steriliseringslag [Proposal for a new sterilisation act]; Committee on Health and Welfare 1975:14.

bear witness to the fact that sterilisation and enforced foster care were among the measures society used against them.

The sterilisation legislation was instituted primarily for what was believed to be the population policy interests of society, the idea being that such operations would help increase the quality of the population. The concept of racial improvement was explicitly motivated as being in the best interests of the nation and society. The individual was examined based on a social context that embraced an assessment of her chances of living up to a perceived normality. A common feature of public statements about Roma was that the group was identified as unwanted and a burden.

Decisions to complete an application for sterilisation and the task of carrying out the operation were primarily the responsibility of the public bureaucracy, in other words persons other than those who would be subject to sterilisation. The legislation prescribed that public authorities had extensive opportunities to determine whether individuals would be subjected to physical interventions that meant they would no longer be able to have children. The legislation also became a basis for the National Board of Health and Welfare's assessment of which people would be able to enjoy certain social policy reforms, such as mothers' assistance, and who would be excluded from them. At the beginning of the 1940s, the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that there was a specific rule that Roma women would not automatically have access to mothers' assistance. This meant that the Board prescribed that municipalities did not have a general obligation to safeguard the circumstances of all women and children. In addition, the Board urged municipalities to work specifically with the aim of conducting more sterilisations for preventative social policy purposes.

The review of sterilisation files from the mid-1940s shows that people with Roma affiliation were extensively problematised and subjected to sterilisation. What also appears prominently is that Roma were treated unfairly in many different situations. The files indicate that individuals' situations, family relationships and conditions such as poverty, homelessness and overcrowding were recorded and registered. Many of the people affected had

experienced life-long contact with the public authorities and also of children being taken into care.

Applications for sterilisation contain assessments of people that conform to the stigmatising descriptions of Roma by both the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief and the National Board of Health and Welfare. Other justifications for sterilisation that carried weight were poverty and overcrowding. The review of files from the mid-1940s confirms the experiences of many Roma that applications and decisions to sterilise and to take children into care were closely connected. The people who were subjected to sterilisation were damaged physically. In addition, their legal rights, integrity and freedom of action were violated on several levels.



## 4 Entry ban and regulated immigration

### 4.1 Introduction

Today it is generally agreed that racial biology at the beginning of the last century was not an isolated research theory about race and heredity. The perception of the purity and supremacy of the Nordic race was a generally accepted one and had few critics at the beginning of the 20th century. Racial biology was an accepted science and it coincided with and comprised part of the reforms drawn up in Sweden during the inter-war period. One of the measures that was implemented in the 20th century and, in many respects, was based on interpretations from racial biology about the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the Swedish population, is the ban on Roma entering the country from 1914 to 1954.

“There was an entry ban that applied to Roma between 1914 and 1954. We were considered a contemptuous and inferior race. Roma who survived persecution by the Nazis weren’t permitted to enter the country following the end of the Second World War. Roma received no help or support as survivors. The entry ban also tells us something about how undesirable we Roma who were already within Sweden’s borders were. It is outrageous that nothing much has actually changed in terms of the antiziganistic and pernicious notions about Roma since the time when we were banned from entering the country. How is it possible that Roma are, even today, so undesirable?” Rosa Taikon<sup>340</sup>

This chapter describes how the legislative and administrative powers prevented and regulated Roma immigration from the end of the 19th century to the end of the 1970s. The chapter begins with an overview of how the legislative and administrative powers

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<sup>340</sup> Interview with Rosa Taikon 23/8/2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

justified the entry ban. It then moves on to examine how the entry ban was put into practice, using Ludvig Wikander's study *Invandringsförbudet 1914, motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914, justifications and consequences] as a guide. This is followed by an account of the motives that drove the policy of organised transfer of certain “gypsies”, the purpose being to determine whether the policy adopted after the lifting of the entry ban in 1954 involved a shift in the way Roma from other countries were viewed.

## 4.2 Entry ban on Roma

The historian Norma Montesino Parra argues that there was a connection between the norms that guided the vagrancy legislation at the end of the 19th century and the emergence of restrictive immigration laws at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>341</sup> The Vagrancy Act of 1885 stated that a vagrant was a person who lacked the means of self-support and territorial attachment and lived in a way that was contrary to the prevailing moral and political order:

“Any person who idly roams around from one town to the next, without means to support himself shall, where circumstances do not evince his seeking of employment, be treated as a vagrant in accordance with this law. The same treatment should also apply to those who otherwise, without the means to support themselves, neglect to seek honest employment based on their abilities and furthermore lead their lives in a way that endangers public safety, order or civilised behaviour. Children under the age of fifteen may not be treated as vagrants. The identity, place of residence, living circumstances and appearance of those arrested shall be recorded.”<sup>342</sup>

A provision concerning foreign vagrants was introduced into the Vagrancy Act in 1886:

“With regard to the treatment of foreigners who are discovered in vagrancy or begging here in the country, or women here in the country discovered in vagrancy or begging or other offences that make them liable to being treated as vagrants, shall in the event that the

<sup>341</sup> Montesino, Norma (2010), *Romer i svensk myndighetspolitik – ett historiskt perspektiv* [The Swedish authorities' policies towards Roma – a historical perspective], pages 16–17.

<sup>342</sup> SFS 1885:27

country to which the person in question is subject is so situated, he or she may be conveyed there without stopping in any other territory.”<sup>343</sup>

Twenty years later, in 1906, a Member of the Riksdag called for legislation to tackle unwanted immigration. Such regulation was to combat the harmful immigration of “elements found to be less beneficial” and the resultant “moral depravity”. The positive effects of such regulation on the quality of the Swedish population could not be underestimated as “a miscellany of riff-raff” that “mainly works its moral poison in society” would thus not enter the country. In addition, such regulation, argued the Member of the Riksdag, would prevent Roma immigration and, in the long term, prevent an increase in the number “of the not entirely well-reputed tattare colonies we already possess”.<sup>344</sup> The following year, when the Riksdag discussed an identical motion, it called on the Government to submit a proposal for legislation to combat undesirable immigration. The Riksdag emphasised population quality aspects in its justification. A law that stated when police authorities could take independent responsibility for deporting a foreigner was intended to prevent the morally and economically damaging impact of foreign persons on the Swedish people:

“The only possibility of freeing the country from such immigration would be to prevent, using the police authorities at the country's border posts, these usually destitute individuals who are injurious to the well-being of society from entering.”<sup>345</sup>

A supposed effect of such legislation was that “the capable and the needed” were not sifted out. One problem was determining which country a deportee would be sent back to. According to the Riksdag, this would lead to the public authorities being:

“powerless against all gypsy bands, organ-grinders and many others.”<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>343</sup> SFS 1886:33.

<sup>344</sup> First Chamber, Motion no. 30, 1906, by Per Lithander, the First Chamber's Protectionist Party, pages 1–5.

<sup>345</sup> The Riksdag's Communications to the King No. 33, 1907, pages 5–8. Recited and approved in the First Chamber on 19 March 1907. Recited and approved in the First Chamber on 20 March 1907. The Legislative Committee's Opinion no. 19.

<sup>346</sup> The Riksdag's Communications to the King No. 33, 1907, pages 5–8.

The Government invited the county administrative boards to provide their opinions on the Riksdag's communication. About half of the county administrative boards, 14 of 25, expressed pernicious perceptions about Roma as a basis for their view that measures were needed.<sup>347</sup> The historian Tomas Hammar, whose thesis sheds light on Sweden's immigration policy at the beginning of the 20th century, concludes that the main question covered in the county administrative boards' opinions on the Riksdag's 1907 communication was "which groups of foreigners were not considered to be desirable in the country".<sup>348</sup> The National Board of Trade, which compiled the county administrative boards' opinions, considered the county administrative boards to have advocated stringent legislation against Roma:

"Some of the public authorities that have communicated with the Board of Trade have recommended more stringent special legislation concerning the first-mentioned types of foreigners; one (the County Administrative Board in Halland County) even propounds an unconditional ban on immigration for foreigners whose profession makes them itinerant, such as organ-grinders, gypsies, saw-filers, sellers of wickerwork and the like."<sup>349</sup>

The National Board of Trade believed legislation was called for:

"The Board finds that the value of a section of those elements attempting to come to this country to be such that there is a great degree of urgency in obtaining, as soon as possible, regulations to facilitate their already being refused entry at the nation's border."<sup>350</sup>

The Government drew up a number of proposals for legislation that aimed to regulate immigration, but these were not passed. A review of the preparatory works shows that the contentious issue was not whether Roma would be singled out; rather, it concerned

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<sup>347</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], page 12. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

<sup>348</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], page 139.

<sup>349</sup> Government Bill no. 42, 1913, page 23; Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], page 10.

<sup>350</sup> Appendix to the Proceedings of the Riksdag from 1913, Government Bills nos. 35–50, Government Bill no.42, page 23.



how labour immigration was viewed.<sup>351</sup> What the proposals had in common was that they contained a provision prescribing that Roma should be denied entry under certain circumstances.<sup>352</sup> The Government's position was that the "population element" known as "tattare" and "gypsies" had constituted a social problem for just over four centuries. Roma were a danger to society and therefore a group to be targeted for denial of entry at the border. According to the Government, measures the public authorities had thus far employed to stop the group's "vagrancy" had not had the intended effect. Not even the 1637 enactment or later measures "have been able to put an end to the gypsies' vagrancy in the country".<sup>353</sup> The enactment referred to by the Government was a royal decree from 1642, "Placat om Tartarnes fördrifwande af landet" [Decree concerning the expulsion of tattare from the country]. The decree enjoined public authorities to ensure that "Gypsies or Tattare" would leave Sweden and the Swedish provinces before 8 November. If they were subsequently discovered in the country, the men would be hung and "pay the penalty of their lives" without trial. All women and children would be expelled from the country. The decree also prescribed punishment for those protecting Roma, both among the public authorities and among the general public. Those who protected Roma were threatened with fines and with liability to provide compensation for any damage Roma were guilty of.<sup>354</sup> The Government also believed that the information concerning Roma included in the statistical five-year report of 1886–1890 was serious. It maintained that the report indicated Roma lived in "concubinage" and "fornication" and were a "shame and dread for ordered Christian society":

"The characteristics, herein used to describe tattare and their situation, should essentially also apply to pure-bred immigrant gypsies, and it could be assumed that the latter, due to their characteristics and their

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<sup>351</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], page 12. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

<sup>352</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], pages 9 ff. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

<sup>353</sup> Kongl. Maj:t: Placat om Tartarnes fördrifwande af landet [Royal Decree concerning the expulsion of tattare from the country]; cf. Montesino Parra, Norma (2002) *Zigenarfrågan: intervention och romantik* [The gypsy question: Intervention and romance], page 41.

<sup>354</sup> Government Bill no. 42, 1913, page 18.

way of life, are even less suited than tattare for inclusion as an element of ordered society.”<sup>355</sup>

The Government stated that “in several municipalities agreements had been concluded not to provide them with lodgings”. At the same time, it was stressed that regulations concerning registration for the census could not be applied to Roma “who appear all of a sudden in one or another municipality and then leave again after a few days”.<sup>356</sup>

The Act concerning a Ban on Certain Foreigners Residing in the Country came into force in 1914. The provision that singled out and stipulated a ban on Roma immigrants was set out in the Act's first section:

“Foreign gypsies, also being foreigners, who clearly have the intention of seeking to support themselves through begging or who, during their travels from place to place, make their living by the performance of music, exhibition of animals or some other similar employment, shall, upon their arrival in the country or immediately thereafter, be refused entry by the police authority.” (SFS 1914:196)

The 1914 Act was replaced in 1927 by the Right to Reside in the Country Act (SFS 1927:333). However, Hammar's review of the content and justifications of this act shows that it was not a piece of rights legislation. In many respects it was the reverse – i.e. it imposed limitations on the rights of certain people. Hammar underlines that that most significant justification for the legislation from 1927 was partly to protect the Swedish labour market from foreign competition and partly to protect the homogeneity of the Swedish race. “The value of our country's population being of a rare, homogeneous, unmixed race can scarcely be overestimated” stated the Government in its bill.<sup>357</sup> The legislation of 1927 introduced compulsory passports as well as the Government's powers to require a visa in certain cases. All those travelling into the country via main routes of entry and ports were required to go through a passport control. Those who had no passport were

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<sup>355</sup> Government Bill no. 42, 1913, page 17.

<sup>356</sup> Government Bill no. 42, 1913, page 16.

<sup>357</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], page 199.

refused entry, as were all those who should have had visas in accordance with the legislation from 1927, but did not.<sup>358</sup> The provision banning Roma immigration appears in Chapter 4, Section 1.<sup>359</sup> The Right to Reside in the Country Act (SFS 1927:333) was provisional and the Riksdag was to examine the circumstances again five years later. In 1932, the Riksdag and all the referral bodies were in agreement that the act from 1927 should continue to apply. The National Board of Health and Welfare emphasised the following in its statement on the 1927 legislation:

“All the reasons occasioning the adoption of this act in 1927 do not merely continue to apply, but have grown significantly in strength”.<sup>360</sup>

The Riksdag's opinion was that the act had functioned satisfactorily and that it could not be dispensed with. It was perceived as essential to Swedish policy – protecting employment opportunities, housing and racial public hygiene – that the act established control mechanisms and defined groups whose immigration into Sweden was undesirable.<sup>361</sup> The new Aliens Act adopted in 1937, which with minor amendments continued to apply until 1954, did not change the provision singling out Roma.

### 4.3 Effects of the entry ban

One effect of the entry ban was that Roma living in Sweden could not be sure that they would be allowed back into the country if they travelled abroad. The chapter on the access of Roma to housing indicates that well into the 1960s many Roma were not included in the census and thus did not have access to the rights that derived from such inclusion. One result of the unwillingness of many municipalities to include Roma in the census was that

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<sup>358</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], pages 210–216.

<sup>359</sup> SFS 1927:333.

<sup>360</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], page 225

<sup>361</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], pages 225–228.

many of this group in Sweden were stateless and thus could not provide proof of residence if they had left Sweden. Similarly, the act affected the chances of Roma maintaining ties with relatives and friends in other countries.

“My Russian relatives travelled into and out of Sweden, but suddenly the borders were closed. It was a catastrophe for us. Our family ties were cut. The ban on entering Sweden destroyed my family's chances of meeting their relatives. When the entry ban came into force, one of my relatives travelled back to Russia. One part of the family and his children remained in Sweden. He never saw them again.” Mikael Demetri Taikon <sup>362</sup>

“We’ve lost so many family connections as a result of the entry ban. How is it possible to re-establish such bonds? We're talking about several generations. We’ve lost our language, Russian, as well. We didn't dare use Russian. If we'd travelled to visit our relatives on the other side of the Baltic, we wouldn't have been let in again. We would have been split up again.” Angelina Dimiter Taikon <sup>363</sup>

Sofia Taikon survived concentration camps in Germany and came to Sweden with the White Buses.<sup>364</sup> However, it was not clear whether she would be permitted to stay in Sweden:

“While the public authorities were investigating where in Poland they were to send me, I was moved around between different refugee camps.” <sup>365</sup>

When Roma in Sweden managed to find Sofia Taikon and informed the relevant public authorities that they were her relatives, she was allowed to remain in Sweden.

“Is it war that creates evil, or is it evil that creates war? How can normal people not protest when others commit atrocities?”<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Interview with Mikael Demeter Taikon 15 April 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>363</sup> Interview with Angelina Demeter Taikon 15 April 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>364</sup> The Swedish Red Cross humanitarian mission to rescue concentration camp inmates used the White Buses and has been described in various books, essays and publications, e.g. The Swedish Red Cross (2000), Svenska Röda Korsets räddningsaktion till Tyskland under Andra världskriget [The Swedish Red Cross rescue operation in Germany during the Second World War]; Svanberg, Ingvar & Tydén, Mattias (2005), Tusen år av invandring, En svensk kulturhistoria [A thousand years of immigration. A cultural history of Sweden].

<sup>365</sup> Lundgren, Gunilla & Taikon, Sofia (2006), Zofi Z-4515, page 29.

<sup>366</sup> Lundgren, Gunilla & Taikon, Sofia (2006), Zofi Z-4515, page 36.

Sofia Taikon's questions place the ban on Roma immigration in the context of existence at a time when Roma were being persecuted and exterminated during the Second World War and right up until 1954. The review of the preparatory works indicates that a repeal of the ban was not discussed.

Despite the Holocaust having been strongly bound into the writing of European history, the crimes committed against the human rights of Roma during the Second World War have not had a self-evident place in the account. Literature concerning Sweden's view of refugees either does not mention conditions for Roma at all or mentions them only in sweeping generalisations. The discourse has only included the Holocaust and the persecution of Roma during the Second World War to a limited extent. The following conditions are noted as being typical of living conditions for Roma in Germany in (SOU 1956:43) *Zigenarfrågan* [The gypsy question]:

“Germany led the way in methods involving the greater use of police [in preventing Roma migration and controlling them]. In order to migrate from one place to another there, it was long the case that the gypsies had to have a special migration permit. In the larger cities, gypsies were only allowed to move around in certain areas. All gypsies over six years of age would also have their fingerprints taken.”<sup>367</sup>

There is no doubt today that the persecution and extermination of Roma during the Second World War was racist and socially motivated. Local government drove the persecution. Raciologists determined which Roma had “racially mixed” blood (which the majority had) and could not thus be considered fully adequate human beings. This resulted in their deportation to Jewish ghettos and concentration camps. As early as the end of the 19th century, the German authorities had catalogued the number of Roma and their way of life and had also placed the group in camps. This was most often initiated by the local authorities.<sup>368</sup> The signal from the national level was clear. For example, marriages were banned between Germans and persons from “foreign races” in 1934 and

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<sup>367</sup> SOU 1956:43, *Zigenarfrågan* [The gypsy question], page 24.

<sup>368</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], pages 17 f. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

shortly afterwards a ban was introduced on marriages between “gypsies” and people of “German blood”.<sup>369</sup>

One interpretation is that the fate of Roma often depended on local circumstances as a unified Nazi policy had not been worked out. Roma were shot in forests or outside villages. Even today, it has not been established exactly how many Roma were murdered by the Nazis in Germany and other European countries occupied by the Germans. Research is currently being conducted, but there is still a lack of sources and uncertainty concerning numbers. The differing estimates clearly show that there is a lack of reliable knowledge about how Roma were affected by the Second World War. About half a million Roma were killed according to some estimates. This would be about half of Europe's Roma population at that time. However, estimates of the number of Roma victims vary significantly and there are researchers who argue that that there were both more and fewer Roma who were victims of Nazi atrocities.<sup>370</sup>

The number of camps where Roma were placed increased at the end of the 1930s. Roma were also subjected to outright persecution and arrest. The background to this was a decree worded by Himmler in which Roma were identified as “a racial problem”. The state took control of Roma by ultimately registering and interring virtually the entire Roma population in camps, which had catastrophic results.<sup>371</sup> Germany resettled unwanted groups in Poland. In October 1939, an order was given that no Roma would be allowed to leave their place of residence as they would all be deported to Poland within a year. These deportations were carried out. Many Roma who had been placed in camps were also left in these camps, which later came to function as concentration camps. After 1941, it was essentially impossible for Roma to leave

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<sup>369</sup> Bruchfeld, Stéphane & Levine, Paul A. (2010), *Tell Ye Your Children ... A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945 – with a new chapter about Sweden and the Holocaust*, page 20

<sup>370</sup> Liégois, Jean-Pierre (2007), *Roma in Europe*, pages 114 ff; Svanberg, Ingvar & Tydén, Mattias (2005), *Tusen år av invandring. En svensk kulturhistoria [A thousand years of immigration. A cultural history of Sweden]*, page 354; Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences]*, page 12. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK; Kendrick, Donald & Puxon, Gratton (1973), *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, pages 183–184.

<sup>371</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences]*, page 20. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

Germany. Many Roma were transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau and thousands were murdered in gas chambers on the night of 2 August 1944.<sup>372</sup> This event is known as Gypsy Night.

#### 4.3.1 60 Roma refused entry at the Swedish border

Hammar concludes that it is not possible to find an exact figure for the number of people immediately refused entry at the Swedish border.<sup>373</sup> This is partly due to the fact that the number of people trying to get into Sweden cannot be deduced solely from the number who were refused entry. Sweden's borders are also maintained by its legations abroad, which had a certain leeway to decide cases independently. A general recommendation issued by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1935 described when legations abroad could independently refuse entry, which was when it was clear to the visa authority that the application should not be approved. An example given was that the provisions of the Aliens Act concerning refusal of entry and deportation stated that “it appears gypsies should in general be denied visas”.<sup>374</sup>

As one aspect of his study of the immigration ban's justifications and consequences, Wiklander has examined decisions concerning refusal of entry, deportation, visas and expulsion during the period 1914–1954. Wiklander believes that there were 60 Roma in this material. Compared to the total number of people the cases concern, this number may seem low. However, if the figure of 60 Roma is instead related to the perception of the day that the nation had to be protected from this group and from those few persons who, according to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, had been registered as “gypsies”, the number of Roma

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<sup>372</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], page 20. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK; Bruchfeld, Stéphane & Levine, Paul A. (2010) *Tell Ye Your Children ... A book about the Holocaust in Europe 1933–1945 – with a new chapter about Sweden and the Holocaust*, page 45; Kalander, Berith (1996), *Min mor fånge Z-4517* [My mother, prisoner Z-4517].

<sup>373</sup> Hammar, Tomas (1964), *Sverige åt svenskarna. Invandringspolitik, utlänningskontroll och asylrätt 1900–1932* [Sweden for the Swedish. Immigration policy, control of foreigners and the right of asylum 1900–1932], pages 215–216

<sup>374</sup> Lindberg, Hans (1973), *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–1941* [Swedish refugee policy under international pressure 1936–1941], pages 307 & 310.

refused entry at the Swedish border may be seen in a different light.

The practice of refusing entry must also be interpreted in light of the instructions applicable to passport controls at the border. The passport officials, who were mainly police officers, answered to the local police chiefs (police commissioners, police superintendents). These were subordinate to the county administrative boards. The National Board of Health and Welfare supervised the passport controls and issued advice and instructions concerning their operation etc. At the end of the 1930s, part of the passport controls' main task was to monitor that:

“only those foreigners who have proper identification papers and visas enter the country, [while] deported and destitute foreigners, gypsies etc. are prevented from entering.”<sup>375</sup>

Wiklander indicates that the ban on Roma immigration is never cited in any of the 60 cases. One frequently used reason for refusing entry to Roma was that they “lacked identification papers”,<sup>376</sup> which may be interpreted in light of the instructions found in the directives.

Some of the cases Wiklander describes in his study are described below. What is common to many of the people refused entry was that they attempted to enter Sweden from Denmark or Norway. Complications at the local and national level are evident. Public officials and politicians devoted a lot of time and energy to denying Roma any opportunity to enter the country under any circumstances.

One Roma woman from Finland was refused entry at the Swedish border in 1936. The reason given was that “it could reasonably be suspected that she intended to support herself by fortune-telling”. The requirement to support oneself “honestly” appeared in the section that also regulated the ban on Roma immigration.

One Roma family was deported from Denmark in 1912 and tried to enter Sweden, but was refused. As a result, the family

<sup>375</sup> Quotation Lindberg, Hans (1973), *Svensk flyktingpolitik under internationellt tryck 1936–1941* [Swedish refugee policy under international pressure 1936–1941].

<sup>376</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.



travelled to the Netherlands, but were denied entry. They attempted to enter other European countries, but were denied and finally attempted to enter Norway. They came to Sweden again in the autumn of 1915. This time, too, the family were immediately refused entry. The neighbouring countries Norway and Denmark refused to allow them to enter. Consequently, the case ended up in Sweden – and now landed on the Government's desk. Over the course of 1916, the case was discussed in Cabinet on three occasions. The Government's contacts indicated that Denmark, where many members of the family were born, still refused to allow them to enter the country. Norway, where the family had arrived following a long detour, also refused to receive the family. Sweden turned to France, the country where the father was born, but where he had never lived. France gave the family permission to enter. However, the family ended up staying in Sweden because of practical problems that the Government was not able to resolve, despite its close involvement, and the family was issued with Swedish alien's passports in 1935.<sup>377</sup>

In the autumn of 1930, Sweden refused entry to a party of Roma from Germany – a woman, a man, their two children and an accompanying sister with her child – the justification being that they did not have visas in their passports. At that time Sweden did not require German citizens to hold visas. Despite this, the party was sent back to Germany on a ship the day they arrived in Sweden. A relative in Sweden protested against the decision in a letter to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This man informed the Ministry that his relatives held German passports, were well-to-do and that they only intended to visit a seriously ill relative in Sweden. He emphasised in the letter that there was no risk they would stay in Sweden for any length of time.<sup>378</sup>

The Ministry regularly drew up secret lists of persons who had been “blacklisted” and would not be granted visas. For Roma, it appears that all that was required to end up on this list was to have

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<sup>377</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], pages 22-24. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK.

<sup>378</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandringsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], pages 23-24. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK

been denied entry once. The list was updated annually and sent to Swedish embassies abroad. The list from March 1937, for example, contained 3 000 names and the legations were exhorted to carefully check each visa application against the list. Some of the people who were sent back to Germany by ship ended up on the list with the designation “gypsy (German)”. At least four of these six people ended up in Auschwitz.<sup>379</sup>

#### 4.4 Entry ban on Roma abolished in 1954

Following minor and temporary amendments and extensions of the Aliens Act (because the Government wanted to wait for international developments to stabilise), the Aliens Committee was appointed in 1949. Its official report concluded that discrimination based on ethnic affiliation was incompatible with the Swedish conception of justice:

“A similar type of discrimination against an alien, based only on affiliation to a certain race, may, in the committee's , be considered contrary to the Swedish conception of justice. Accordingly, the committee has not included this reason for refusing entry in its proposal. ... Accordingly, no separate rules will apply to gypsies, instead they shall be treated in the same way as other aliens. If there are reasonable grounds to assume that gypsies will not be supporting themselves through honest work, but instead through fortune-telling, incantations and suchlike, entry may be refused in accordance with the existing rules.<sup>380</sup>

The designation “Gypsy” was removed as grounds for refusal of entry, but the preparatory works indicate that the committee's perceptions about Roma were guided by a notion that “gypsy” implied a person who could not support himself or herself honestly. A not insignificant proportion of the discussion ahead of the new legislation involved which measures would contribute to “the settlement of aliens” being of “benefit to society”. In the debate preceding the Riksdag's adoption of the Aliens Act of 1954

<sup>379</sup> Wiklander, Ludvig (2012), *Invandningsförbudet 1914. Motiv och konsekvenser* [The entry ban of 1914. Justifications and consequences], pages 23-24. Ref. no. A2012/3952/DISK

<sup>380</sup> SOU 1951:42, *Betänkande med förslag till utlänningslag m.m* [Official report with proposals for an aliens act etc.], page 191.

(SFS 1954:193) it was stressed that it is “vital that undesirable, destitute aliens are, to the greatest possible extent, prevented from entering the country in order to devote themselves to idling”.<sup>381</sup>

#### 4.5 Organised transfer of certain “gypsies”

As has already been established, there is no doubt that a large proportion of Roma were exterminated and murdered during the Second World War. Many of the Roma who survived the Nazi concentration camps were stateless. No country acknowledged that Roma had been victims of persecution and extermination. It is hard to find information about whether there was any European country with a policy that provided for the rights of Roma. Common to many European countries was that they did not take responsibility for the violations that Roma had been subjected to during the Second World War and that, based on stereotypical conceptions of Roma, they continued to pursue policies that disregarded the human rights of Roma and their social needs. Many Roma were placed in reception camps because they did not have any identification papers or access to a home and many Roma were expelled in Europe.<sup>382</sup>

Based on the notion that many Roma were homeless and moved around in Europe, a proposal to investigate the situation of Roma in Europe was raised in the Council of Europe in 1967. The proposal asserts that the rapid changes taking place in society affected the Roma population's opportunities to support themselves. Migration was held up as a factor characteristic of Roma and a state of affairs that required investigation:

“Many of them lose their opportunities to continue with their traditional work as craftspeople or skilled workers. Their handicap in terms of lack of literacy and vocational education is aggravated. Successive reductions in border controls and the increasing mobility of

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<sup>381</sup> Government Bill 1954:41, pages 91–93.

<sup>382</sup> Taikon, Katarina (1979) *Zigenare [Gypsies]*; Kendrick, Donald & Puxon, Gratton (1973) *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*; Liegois, Jean-Pierre (2007), *Roma in Europe*; Barsony, Janos & Daroczi, Agnes (Eds.) (2008) *Pharrajimos: The Fate of the Roma During the Holocaust*.

labour necessitates a new outlook on the problems of this traditionally nomadic population group.”<sup>383</sup>

The Council of Europe adopted a recommendation in 1969 in which the member states were urged to prevent discrimination against Roma, to take adequate steps to improve opportunities for Roma to acquire an academic and vocational education. The member states were also urged to encourage Roma participation and self-organisation on issues that concerned them.<sup>384</sup> In Sweden, a new policy area was designed that aimed to receive Roma from other European countries in an organised manner. The policy took shape during a period in which there was an extensive shortage of labour in Sweden and when many people from other Nordic countries and the rest of Europe came here as labour. Later in the 1970s, the wave of labour immigration was replaced by refugee immigration, and it is the latter that is still predominant in Sweden.<sup>385</sup>

How the organised transfer of Romas would take place was formulated by a working group within the Ministry of the Interior. The Government stated in its directive to the working group that the following circumstances should be taken into account:

“There is no definitive information about the number of gypsies, but it has been estimated that there are approximately 7 million in total, of whom several hundred thousand in Europe. Many signs indicate that at least European gypsies regard Sweden as one of the most attractive immigration countries, a perception that gypsies living here also appear to be spreading among gypsies in Europe. Against this background, there is reason to anticipate increased immigration pressure on Sweden from gypsies who currently live in various

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<sup>383</sup> Stencil In 1969:1 Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies] – pages 11 ff give the proposal for an inquiry into the “gypsy population’s” situation in the Council of Europe

<sup>384</sup> Recommendation 563 on the situation of Gypsies and other travellers in Europe; cf. Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 11 and Ds A 1975:8, Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 28.

<sup>385</sup> Boguslaw, Julia (2012) Svensk invandringspolitik under 500 år: 1512–2012 [Five hundred years of Swedish immigration policy: 1512–2012].

European countries, whether these are their countries of origin or countries to which they have proceeded for various reasons.”<sup>386</sup>

The Government also stated that many Roma in Europe “probably live in difficult conditions” and are subject to extensive discrimination. However, the Government maintained in its directive to the working group that it should also take into account the following viewpoint:

“At the same time, there is cause to question whether a contributory cause may also be that gypsies might find it harder than other sections of the population to accept and adapt to established society because of their often distinctive living conditions.”<sup>387</sup>

It was believed that “the gypsies' problem” would take a long time to solve and required European cooperation:

“The gypsies' problem in Europe cannot be resolved by a single country offering them sanctuary and assuming complete responsibility for their future. The solution must be sought within the scope of, at any rate, European cooperation based on an elucidation of the gypsies' current situation.”<sup>388</sup>

The directives also stress that an assessment of how many Roma would be covered by the organised transfer should take into account the opportunity to incorporate and adapt the group.

“The number that will be transferred should be determined on the basis of our potential to incorporate the gypsies into Swedish society. Given the way of life that gypsies generally have, adjustment to the essential principles of our social life presents particular difficulties and takes a long time. This should be taken into account when the number is determined.”<sup>389</sup>

One question that the working group was tasked with investigating was the ways in which humanitarian immigration could be replaced by an organised, collective transfer of Roma:

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<sup>386</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 6.

<sup>387</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 6, pages 5–9 give the directive to the working group.

<sup>388</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 6.

<sup>389</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 8, pages 5–9 give the directive.

“If an organised transfer of gypsies to [Sweden] takes place, one consequence will be a lack of scope for individual humanitarian immigration in addition to clear-cut asylum cases. For this reason, individual applications from gypsies with residence permits should in general be rejected. Under no such circumstances should applications be approved from those who have already travelled to Sweden illegally or under the pretences of a tourist visit or other temporary visit to Sweden.”<sup>390</sup>

The working group's investigation concluded that Roma were collectively encumbered with extensive problems and costs. Roma, regardless of whether they had recently arrived in Sweden or not, are consistently reported as having extensive “adaptation problems”. In a hearing arranged by the working group, Stockholm City's social welfare board, the National Board of Education and the Education Department at Stockholm University stated that “adjustment and adaptation problems” were a characteristic of “foreign gypsies”.<sup>391</sup> The National Board of Education maintained that this pattern of problems was behind the formulation of adult education for Roma:

“Adult education must be focused on much that lies outside the acquisition of knowledge itself. Teaching must touch upon virtually the entire world-view of gypsies.”<sup>392</sup>

Proposals for Roma immigration would, according to the working group, be regarded in the light of the following problems:

“The issues concerning gypsies and their circumstances in Sweden actually consist of several problems. The first concerns Swedish gypsies and their adjustment to modern society as described in Chapter 3. The second concerns gypsies from countries outside the Nordic region who have immigrated to Sweden over the past 10 years or so and whose adaptation problems have largely remained unresolved ... To a great extent, gypsy immigration from non-Nordic countries has taken place in contravention of applicable regulations.”<sup>393</sup>

<sup>390</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 8, pages 5–9 give the directive

<sup>391</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], pages 99, 100 & 102.

<sup>392</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 102.

<sup>393</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 84.

The working group proposed an experiment lasting two to three years in which Roma would be transferred to Sweden in organised ways within the scope of the organised transfer of refugees already in place.<sup>394</sup> For “planning purposes” it was necessary to determine the annual number:

“The number of handicapped gypsies transferred will be that which can be taken care of satisfactorily.”<sup>395</sup>

The annual quota was proposed to be between 40 and 50 and cover people over the age of 16. The working group was of the opinion that Roma families had many children and that children under 16 should not be counted in the quota. However, annual evaluations would take into account whether the quota should be adjusted in future to make allowances for the number of Roma who would actually be affected by the organised transfer.<sup>396</sup> A fundamental justification for implementing a system for the organised transfer of Roma was that this made it easier to control and stem immigration<sup>397</sup> and that it would replace the humanitarian immigration of Roma. It was thought that a regime of this kind would make it easier to plan in advance the measures that would need to be in place for the Roma's “reception and adaptation”.<sup>398</sup> The working group also stated which Roma would be covered by the organised transfer.

“The organised transfer should ... essentially concern such gypsies who, as a result of their social handicap, have limited opportunities to emigrate. In this context, it should primarily be a question of gypsies who have neither any education of note nor work experience that would be an asset in the Swedish labour market. They are assumed to be illiterate in many cases. These gypsies are thus very handicapped in

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<sup>394</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 117.

<sup>395</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], pages 125 & 130.

<sup>396</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 126. Cf. page 116 which paints a picture of the danger that “kinsfolk” of people covered by the proposal would be able to travel to Sweden by invoking their familial relationship.

<sup>397</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 130.

<sup>398</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], pages 114 f.

an industrial society and may better be classified as gypsy handicap cases.”<sup>399</sup>

If the organised transfer was to succeed, knowledge was required and measures had to be on an appropriate scale:

“An organised transfer of gypsy handicap cases is conditional on having knowledge both of the nature and extent of the measures required for their adaptation and of any difficulties that may arise.”<sup>400</sup>

“It is ... vital that an organised transfer of foreign gypsies is of a magnitude that enables any problems that may arise to be overcome ....”<sup>401</sup>

The working group emphasised that it was vital to put in place educational resources and adaptation measures that helped Roma support themselves. It was important that those selected received detailed information about conditions in Sweden and the Swedish labour market, as well as about the measures planned for their assistance. As the following quotation indicates, the basic premise was that Roma lived in a situation of their own choosing and that responsibility for this situation therefore fell on the Roma themselves.

“It must be strongly emphasised that the traditional gypsy occupations cannot provide them with a living here in this country and that a nomadic way of life would severely inhibit their ability to support themselves. In this context, it should also be underlined that peddlery is not permitted without a specific permit.”<sup>402</sup>

In 1975, the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues presented a report on an experiment with non-Nordic gypsies and proposed measures. The Expert Group's report describes how in 1971 the National Employment Board was empowered, in consultation with the National Board of Health and Welfare, the National Board of Immigration and the expert group itself, to transfer a maximum of

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<sup>399</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 115.

<sup>400</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 116.

<sup>401</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 117.

<sup>402</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 119.



50 or so “socially handicapped gypsies over 16 years of age, including their children, from Italy to Sweden”. The following year, these public authorities were authorised to transfer around 10 persons over 16 years of age and their children. No figure was provided for 1973, rather the authorities were authorised to transfer “a small number of socially handicapped non-Nordic gypsies”.<sup>403</sup> A total of 185 Roma arrived in the period from 1971 to 1974 as part of the organised transfer.<sup>404</sup>

One conclusion of the expert group was that the regulated, organised transfer of non-Nordic Roma should continue. The most important argument in favour of this position was that it made it possible to plan appropriate measures for the reception of Roma in advance. Whether the measures that had been implemented up to that point had achieved the desired results was hard to determine, given the “complex handicap” that was accepted as characterising Roma.<sup>405</sup> One further argument in favour of organised transfers was that:

“Sweden will certainly remain an attractive country of immigration for non-Nordic gypsies for a long time to come.”<sup>406</sup>

The organised transfer of Roma made it possible for the public authorities to track and control where these Roma settled, how they supported themselves and the extent to which they took advantage of adult education.<sup>407</sup> The adult education offered to

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<sup>403</sup> Ds A 1975:8 Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 79.

<sup>404</sup> Ds A 1975:8 Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 80.

<sup>405</sup> Ds A 1975:8 Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 98.

<sup>406</sup> Ds A 1975:8 Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 98.

<sup>407</sup> Ds A 1975:8, Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 10.

Roma who had come to Sweden through the organised transfer was characterised by its experimental focus. Such education was also adapted for people with physical and mental impairments.<sup>408</sup> An extensive resettlement organisation was in place involving representatives from social services, school administrations, county employment boards, employment agencies, vocational education centres, housing agencies, housing companies, property administrators, family education organisations and a local contact at the National Board of Health and Welfare.<sup>409</sup>

Several municipalities started a family education organisation in conjunction with the “resettlement” of Roma within their borders. These were municipal organisations that the National Board of Health and Welfare allocated funding to. One of these organisations is described in the Expert Group's evaluation of the organised transfer. The family education provided was called “at-home activities” and the employees were called “at-homers”.<sup>410</sup> A working group consisting of representatives from the municipality's social services and day nurseries, trustees and adult education teachers and also from the National Board of Health and Welfare met once every two weeks. The “at-homers” were also instructed by a psychologist for one full day every other week. The working group that worked with this family education programme agreed that it had a “prophylactic effect”, driving the adaptation of Roma in the right direction. The expert group's evaluation was that the programme was a “valuable implement” and should be available to “gypsies” who were in need of such support in future.<sup>411</sup>

The experiment was expanded in 1976 and 1977 and also came to involve Roma from the Nordic countries and Roma who had applied for residence permits on grounds other than refugee status.<sup>412</sup> In the early 1980s, state funding for initiatives on behalf

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<sup>408</sup> Ds A 1975:8, *Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor* [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 170.

<sup>409</sup> Ds A 1975:8 *Zigenare i Sverige* [Gypsies in Sweden], pages 107 ff.

<sup>410</sup> Ds A 1975:8 *Zigenare i Sverige* [Gypsies in Sweden], page 111.

<sup>411</sup> Ds A 1975:8 *Zigenare i Sverige* [Gypsies in Sweden], pages 119 ff.

<sup>412</sup> Official Report of the Committee on Health and Welfare 1983/84:28, om ersättning till kommunerna för hjälp till utländska medborgare, flyktingar m.m. [concerning compensation for municipalities for help provided to foreign citizens, refugees, etc.], page 4.

of Roma and “socially handicapped non-Nordic Roma” was replaced by another grant.<sup>413</sup>

The Government's directive to the working group in 1969 noted that Roma from Finland were coming to Sweden within the scope of the Nordic labour market and the Nordic passport control agreement of 1954. Such immigration was completely different to “our controlled and organised immigration”.<sup>414</sup> At the same time, the view that “immigration of Finnish gypsies to Sweden is a separate problem that should not be addressed in this context” was emphasised.<sup>415</sup>

In 1969, the Nordic Council adopted a recommendation that the governments of Finland and Sweden should improve the circumstances of Roma and their chances of “adapting”. The proposal stressed that “gypsies' adjustment to society” was an issue common to both Finland and Sweden, given the freedom of movement for Roma between these two countries.<sup>416</sup> A working group for issues concerning “Finnish gypsies” was appointed in 1974 with the aim of surveying their circumstances. A survey of the circumstances of 460 Finnish Roma had already been conducted in 1970. The total number of Roma in Finland was estimated at around 1 000.<sup>417</sup> The City of Stockholm feared that humane treatment of Finnish Roma would lead to an increased influx of Roma from Finland. It was also this fear that motivated the Gypsy Section, which was a municipal organisation in Stockholm, in its policy of not targeting this group with any specific measures.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>413</sup> Govt. Bill 1979/80:1 Om Socialtjänsten [Concerning the Social Services], page 476; Ds S 1981:20 Förändring av nuvarande statsbidrag till familjepedagogisk verksamhet bland flyktingar och zigenare [Change to the current state grant to family education organisations for refugees and gypsies], page 20.

<sup>414</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 5.

<sup>415</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 7.

<sup>416</sup> Stencil In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 146; Nordic Council Recommendation No. 23/1969; cf. Ds A 1975:8, Zigenare i Sverige [Gypsies in Sweden], page 30 deals with the justifications behind the Nordic Council's recommendation.

<sup>417</sup> Ds A 1975:8 Zigenare i Sverige [Gypsies in Sweden], page 61.

<sup>418</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 24. Ref. no. A 2012/1448.

## 4.6 Concluding remarks

A ban on Roma immigration to Sweden was in force during the first half of the 20th century. It lasted from 1914 to 1954.

The ban was motivated by the notion that Roma did not fit into society and were therefore undesirable. Race-biological perceptions based on the assumed connection between appearance, character traits and ability to be a part of society, informed the legislative and administrative powers' view of what needed to be done. The ban on Roma immigration thus revolved around the same threat scenarios and hierarchical view of people as the sterilisation legislation would subsequently be based on. The legislators' intention was for the ban to prevent the number of Roma in the country increasing or becoming too high.

The examination of the policy area involving the organised transfer of certain "gypsies" shows that policy at the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s was in many respects based on the perception that the number of Roma should not become too high. Entry should take place under controlled forms. Roma outside the country were defined as "socially handicapped" and they were believed to live a nomadic life. Although discrimination against Roma was one aspect described, the perception that the situation of Roma was of their own choosing was enduring and characterised many of the measures. Many of the Roma who came to Sweden in the organised transfer had their situation examined and addressed with the help of therapeutic treatments. Initiatives were implemented to "adjust and adapt" the group and offer, using appropriate means, another world-view that would enable Roma to break with their partly self-chosen isolation and give them a place in society. The assessment of this prophylactic effect was based on the notion that undesirable thought patterns and actions should be eliminated through treatment and be replaced with patterns of thought and action that characterise civic-minded citizens.

In parallel with the organised transfer of certain "gypsies", efforts were made to determine the number of Finnish Roma in Sweden. The working group that was tasked with designing the organised transfer of Roma at the beginning of the 1970s believed that there were 1 000 Finnish Roma in Sweden at that time. The Gypsy Section in Stockholm was of the opinion that no measures

should be targeted at Finnish Roma in order to prevent their number in the country becoming too high. The objective of preventing the number of Roma in Sweden from becoming excessive was also one of the main issues in the policy of organised transfer. It was decided that 184 people would be allowed to come to Sweden under controlled conditions over the course of the period 1971–1974. The Nordic passport control agreement meant that Roma from Finland could not so easily be supervised and prevented from coming to Sweden.



## 5 Access of Roma to housing

### 5.1 Introduction

Housing policy is often described as an important aspect of the general welfare system. State measures affecting the supply of housing have been justified on various grounds depending on the period in which they were introduced. Reasons include family policy, social justice, employment and the ambitions of the welfare state to alleviate housing shortages and increase housing standards. There have also been sanitary or “hygienic” issues, where the policy aim was to remove insanitary and unhealthy homes and residential environments.<sup>419</sup> The state ambitions for housing policy have set minimum standards and are, in many respects, founded on the idea that no one should have to live in a substandard home or residential environment.

Nevertheless, this chapter reveals that many Roma have been excluded and not covered by the general welfare system with regard to housing. Roma have been denied housing and been driven from one place to another, and even when Roma have gained access to a home, conditions have been imposed. As will be made clear, this persecution and exclusion has varied with time and place and has often been motivated by a prejudicial attitude towards the group. This perception had already been expressed by the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief at the beginning of the 20th century:

“As the gypsies' conformation to our society appears to be an insoluble problem, the only expediency is, in one way or another, to get the gypsies out of the country. As the majority of them are

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<sup>419</sup> National Board of Housing, Building and Planning (2007), *Bostadspolitik*, Svensk politik för boende, planering och byggande under 130 år [Housing policy, 130 years of Swedish housing, planning and building policy].

probably Swedish subjects and, in any case, their citizenship of another country is difficult to prove, their disappearance from the country can only be achieved by placing such robust restrictions on their freedom of movement that they find it is to their own advantage to leave the country and emigrate to a country that affords them more favourable conditions.”<sup>420</sup>

The chapter is based primarily on the studies *Vem får bli Stockholmare? Romer i den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden under 1900-talet* [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market in the 20th century] by Lena Ericsson,

*Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924* [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924] by Martin Ericsson, and *Polisen och antiziganismen – en studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956] by Jan Selling, and also on interviews with Roma. Together, these provide a picture of the circumstances that have had an impact on the situation Roma have faced when attempting to acquire and retain a home.

## 5.2 Conditions for settlement in Halland in the 1920s

The historian Martin Ericsson has analysed municipal measures applied in Halland County in the period 1880–1924, the aim of which was to impede or preclude the settlement or geographical mobility of Roma. Ericsson believes that measures targeting Roma settlement and mobility existed in practice long before 1880. The measures enacted in the 20th century and highlighted in his study were actually the continuation of a lengthy municipal tradition.<sup>421</sup>

<sup>420</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 89.

<sup>421</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), *Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924* [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 9. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK



### 5.2.1 Prohibition under penalty of a fine

At the beginning of the 1920s, the activities of rural municipalities in Sweden were regulated by the 1862 Ordinance concerning Municipal Governance in Rural Areas. The Ordinance gave municipalities the right to issue fines on condition that the aim was to maintain “morality, health care and order and safety within the municipality”. However, the Ordinance provided no indication of how the vague concept “order and safety” should be interpreted. Each fine would also be examined by the county administrative board, whose approval was required for the prohibitions to acquire legal force.<sup>422</sup> The most common measures for preventing the presence of Roma in Halland's municipalities were prohibitions under penalty of a fine and bans on almsgiving and on the sale of properties. Prohibitions under penalty of a fine were the most common, and involved municipal residents who had economic or social dealings with Roma being forced to pay fines to the municipality. The commonest form of this type of prohibition was called a harbouring ban, meaning that the municipal assembly forbade Roma to spend the night in farms and other properties within the municipality. Ericsson's analysis of official records from the period in question indicates that municipalities in Halland issued 43 harbouring bans – the first in 1880 and the last in 1923. The ban on allowing Roma to spend the night in available properties was occasionally combined with a ban on donating food to Roma. The official records also reveal that there was a system for rewarding informants and the promise of anonymity. In contrast, inhabitants who allowed Roma to live with them had their names called out in church in order to shame them in front of the entire parish.<sup>423</sup> Ericsson has also found a prohibition on the sale of properties to Roma under penalty of a fine. This was enforced in Vinberg in 1913 when the municipal assembly issued the threat of a fine of SEK 1 000 to those who “within the parish, sell property to

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<sup>422</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot “tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against “tattare” 1880–1924], page 18. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>423</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot “tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against “tattare” 1880–1924], page 10. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

those known as tattare [so] that they become settled within the parish”.<sup>424</sup>

In addition, Ericsson discovered that 34 municipalities in Halland had issued some type of prohibition under penalty of a fine, equivalent to one third of all the county's municipalities. This figure is high, but should be seen as a minimum as Ericsson states not only that the source material is not entirely comprehensive but also that around the turn of the last century various types of prohibition under penalty of a fine were an accepted, widespread and relatively common method used by municipalities to hinder the mobility and settlement of Roma in Halland.<sup>425</sup> In order for the bans to have the intended effect, several municipalities gave the police the specific task of monitoring their observance. Furthermore, Ericsson has found that municipalities set up police units tasked with enforcing the prohibitions.<sup>426</sup> One method that had a huge impact on the chances of Roma being able to settle in Halland's municipalities was that tax revenue was used to buy private properties that the municipality feared would be sold to Roma or to buy properties from Roma in order to drive them out of the municipality. This allowed the municipality to then sell the property to someone from the majority population or, as Ericsson discovered in one case, demolish the buildings on the property to permanently prevent Roma from settling in the municipality.<sup>427</sup>

According to Ericsson, there were two motives behind the municipalities' exclusion of Roma. One was that if one Roma family moved in, it was feared that further undesirable people and families would also move in. The other was that Roma moving in risked increasing the municipalities' expenditure on poor relief. In Rolfstorp there was a perception that Roma who settled in the

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<sup>424</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 11, quotation from the report. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>425</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 11. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>426</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], pages 11–12. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>427</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 13. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

municipality “are seen as a potential burden on poor relief”, and in Veddice a decision to buy a property was justified when “one or more large tattare families” had just moved in with the risk that, if nothing was done “the municipality could ... incur horrendous poor relief expenses”.<sup>428</sup>

### 5.2.2 Prohibitions under penalty of a fine issued in breach of existing regulations

The formal procedure for prohibitions under penalty of a fine was to send them to the county administrative board for approval. This was required for them to acquire legal force. Of the 43 cases in Halland, as few as twelve had been submitted to the county administrative board. This means that 31 of the prohibitions were issued without having followed the existing regulations. Ericsson establishes that all twelve prohibitions examined by the county administrative board were rejected, but he also believes that the rejections did not result in any change in municipal praxis. The rejections were justified primarily on technical grounds, e.g. that the fines collected would go into the municipality's poverty fund, which was not permitted. The county administrative board also pointed to the absurdity of imposing general bans on almsgiving that in practice conflicted with the local policy of preventing people from dying of malnutrition.<sup>429</sup>

For the Halland County Administrative Board, whose official duty was to ensure that laws in Halland were interpreted consistently with the rest of Sweden, and to minimise arbitrary application, the question of definition was important in a number of the cases examined. Accordingly, the County Administrative Board established that the diffuse and unclear meaning of the term

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<sup>428</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot “tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against “tattare” 1880–1924], page 14. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>429</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot “tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against “tattare” 1880–1924], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK

“tattare” made it impossible to know objectively which individuals could not be provided with food and lodging under the law.<sup>430</sup>

In this context it is interesting to note that the Supreme Administrative Court ruled in 1915 that a prohibition under penalty of a fine against people harbouring Roma was illegal. The background to the case was that Lerbo Municipality in Södermanland had issued a prohibition on penalty of a fine in 1914 that, in many respects, was formulated in the same way as those issued in Halland. The County Administrative Board did not approve the municipality's decision. An appeal was made and, without any more detailed justification, the Supreme Administrative Court issued its judgment that there were no grounds for changing the County Administrative Board's decision. Even though the prohibitions under penalty of a fine in Halland largely appear to have come to an end shortly before the Supreme Administrative Court's ruling, Ericsson has found harbouring bans issued at a later date. One was issued in Våxtorp in 1923 and was worded: “those persons within the parish who harbour tattare will be fined SEK 25 each time.”<sup>431</sup>

In light of the above, Ericsson contends that not one of the prohibitions issued was consistent with national legislation.<sup>432</sup> Furthermore, the example from Våxtorp was not unique. No less than three of the prohibitions under penalty of a fine found in the rest of Sweden had been issued after the Supreme Administrative Court's judgment: in Hajom Municipality in Älvsborg County in 1916, in Vebomark village in Löfvånger Municipality in Västerbotten County in 1919, and in Ambjörnarp Municipality in Älvsborg County in 1922.<sup>433</sup> Ericsson has discovered that neither prohibitions under penalty of a fine, targeted police monitoring

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<sup>430</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot ”tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against ”tattare” 1880–1924], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>431</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot ”tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against ”tattare” 1880–1924], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>432</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot ”tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against ”tattare” 1880–1924], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>433</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot ”tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against ”tattare” 1880–1924], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

nor preventative property purchases were unique to municipalities in Halland; they also occurred in other parts of Sweden.<sup>434</sup>

Prohibitions under penalty of a fine and preventative property purchases were thus also used in other parts of the country, which means that the measures practised in Halland had also been applied elsewhere. Prohibitions under penalty of a fine were issued in at least thirteen municipalities outside Halland.<sup>435</sup> Ericsson states that preventative property purchases were not as extensive in the rest of the country as in Halland, except in Älvsborg County in the early 1920s.

The police authorities' responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief (SOU 1923:2) indicate that the municipal exclusion strategies described in Ericsson's study were applied by several municipalities and were measures that the municipalities also wanted the state to sanction. The official report concludes, based on the responses from the country's police districts, that "the nomadic way of life, pursued by a rather large proportion of *tattare*, involves a very real threat to society" and "their way of life is typical vagrancy".<sup>436</sup> The official report underlines that "the danger posed by the nomad to society is due to the fact that he neither has the means for his subsistence nor acquires such through legal activities".<sup>437</sup> The interpretation of this was that no account was taken of "funds acquired through the way of life that is harmful to society".<sup>438</sup> In other words, this meant that Roma livelihoods were defined as dishonest earnings and were not counted." [T]ramps and gypsies, despite property ownership rights and bursting wallets, are not protected from the application of the law as the proceeds from these properties or capital are not their livelihood, but are acquired through begging, fraudulent practices,

<sup>434</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 20. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>435</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 20. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.

<sup>436</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 84 & 86.

<sup>437</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 80.

<sup>438</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 82; legal case hereof Nytt juridiskt arkiv (NJA) 1902, page 365; NJA 1909, page 325; NJA 1922, page 599; NJA 1924, page 81.

etc.”<sup>439</sup> The recommendation from the Committee thus did not differ from the practice municipalities had already developed in order to prevent the settlement of Roma. One of the questions the Committee wanted the country's police authorities to answer concerned the appearance of Roma housing conditions. A compilation of the responses shows that the majority of the Travellers identified by the police owned their own home, often in the form of a house with its own piece of land. It was just as common for them to own a house without land, while a smaller number had a small house.<sup>440</sup> There was also information that Travellers lived in flats, principally in larger built-up areas such as Gothenburg, Jönköping and Malmö. Just over one third lived in rented housing, most often in small houses or flats. Many were lodgers, not infrequently with other Travellers. It is worth noting that only two households in the entire country lived in a poor house or in municipal accommodation.

One of the Committee's conclusions was that legal proceedings could not be instituted against Roma and that Roma consciously avoided the authorities with the aim of evading the police. Another factor that the Committee felt made it hard to intervene was that the matter concerned entire families' ways of life. Consequently, the solution could be found in a package of social interventions directed at Roma families and their subsistence by using existing vagrancy legislation to undermine their chances of making a living. The children would be taken into care by the child welfare boards and placed in children's homes or foster homes.<sup>441</sup> Although many Roma actually possessed their own property and homes, the official report proposed measures to increase permanent settlement using colonies where Travellers would be offered homes and the head of the household could take employment from a local farmer.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 81.

<sup>440</sup> Small house is a generic term for “backstuga cottage”, “cottage”, “small dwelling” or in some individual cases “cabin”.

<sup>441</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 86–88. Here the Committee also discussed funding of the various costs that would arise if the municipalities were to take Traveller children into care using the child welfare boards. The method used in Norway was named as a model.

<sup>442</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 89.

The colony proposal met with a poor response. However, municipal practices reflecting a belief in a segregated society continued. Rules were interpreted and methods developed in order to single out Roma and expel them from municipalities.

## 5.3 Expulsion of Roma

The following is an account of three examples showing how the expulsion of Roma was undertaken in the first half of the 20th century. The first example is from Ystad and has been taken from a statement the police authority in Ystad sent to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief.

### 5.3.1 Ystad in the 1920s

In 1922, when the police authority in Ystad submitted the requested information to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief about the number of “tattare” and “gypsies”, it appears that only one “tattare family” was still there. The police authority in Ystad noted that the situation had been different some years earlier:

“A lot of tattare and their families live in Skivarp Parish close to Ystad, inundating the town. In the years 1912–1915 they settled in Ystad, to the great discomfort of the town's residents. One direct result of this was that tattare from other parts of the country frequently visited the town; theft, fraud, horse-trading, begging and immorality were the order of the day. This led to them being strictly controlled in all ways, not least with the assistance of the Vagrancy Act, which proved to be the best thing. Some acquired cheap, small hovels in courtyards in town and it became very difficult to get rid of them. Through the consistent application of sustained attentiveness, constant arrests for every offence and ensuing interrogation, detention or warnings for vagrancy, all tattare, with the exception of one family, have seen fit to leave the town.”<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives; Ericsson, Martin (2012) Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot “tattare” 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against “tattare” 1880–1924], page 23.

The police authority in Ystad had thus kept continuous watch on Roma families, using the Vagrancy Act as its primary tool. This had caused almost all Roma to leave the town.

Ericsson's review of the vagrancy records shows that the police in Ystad began several records by designating people as "tattare". In addition, Ericsson has discovered that the police superintendent in Ystad ordered the police force to "keep a careful watch" on "tattare families".<sup>444</sup> According to Ericsson, the goal of the measures applied in Ystad was the same as that of the municipal assemblies in Halland. The settlement and presence of Roma in the municipality was to be limited and those Roma who were settled would be induced to leave of their own accord.

### 5.3.2 Jönköping in 1948

Via a close reading of interrogation transcripts and press and court accounts of Jönköping's "tattare riots" in 1948, the historian Jan Selling has analysed the course of events, asking whether Travellers were subjected to negative discrimination by the police and the judicial system and how the actions of the police influenced the events in Jönköping. Selling argues that a collective witch-hunt was conducted against Travellers, who were perceived by the majority population to be divergent and undesirable. The events in Jönköping were made possible by the actions of the press, the police and the general public; together they created and reinforced a negative view of Travellers who lived in the town. One rumour, or one single event, set in motion a chain of violence directed at Travellers. According to Selling, the journalist Bo Hazell has aptly described an important circumstance in the chain of events.

"A peculiar feature of the riots was that the police were passive in the beginning. Their intervention was initially concentrated on rescuing the Travellers as best they could, and it was only when the riots had been in progress for some time that they began targeting the

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<sup>444</sup> Ericsson, Martin (2012), Svenska kommuners utestängningsstrategier mot "tattare" 1880–1924 [Swedish municipalities' exclusion strategies against "tattare" 1880–1924], page 24. Ref. no. A2012/1310/DISK.



troublemakers. But only to keep them in check, not to capture those perpetrating the violence.”<sup>445</sup>

The events that took place consisted of a range of connected incidents in 1948 in which the police and the judicial system intervened in conflicts between “tattare” and “non-tattare”. Selling states that in the majority of cases the Roma involved were sent to jail or fined or simply not taken seriously when exposed to racially motivated violence. Although non-Roma people were also convicted, they were often ascribed extenuating circumstances, says Selling. The non-Roma involved in the riot were not infrequently convicted of disorderly conduct.<sup>446</sup>

Selling reveals that the “racist discourse” among the police and the judicial system was within the scope of the existing social order, i.e. statements with a racist content were considered reasonable and acceptable in a Swedish court in 1948.<sup>447</sup> Selling points out that the actions of the police in the “Jönköping Events” have never been examined and that the racist discourse of the police leadership and the press struck a chord with the population, who formed a vigilance committee against “the tattare”. In connection with the riots in Jönköping, a “heroic verse” was published in the newspaper Smålands Allehanda in July 1948.

“They place a fist in the tattare's bazoo, without further talk or any ado, they wear no uniform like a normal cop, but to tattare trouble they've put a stop.”<sup>448</sup>

The verse can be seen as an expression of admiration for the commitment of citizens that was believed to exist with the aim of expelling “the tattare scourge” from Jönköping.

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<sup>445</sup> Quotation from Selling, Jan (2012), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK; cf. Hazell, Bo (2011), *Resandefolket. Från tattare till traveller* [The travelling people. From tattare to Travellers], page 203.

<sup>446</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>447</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 9. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>448</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], pages 18–19. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

The persecution of Roma in Jönköping in 1948 has affected many Roma's confidence in the public authorities. Two sisters, Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström, who were children when the persecution took place, have vivid memories of the summer of 1948.

“We were little at the time. I'll never forget how I lay down, holding my brothers and sisters under the table. We kept close, close together. I tried to calm them with a story. Mum and dad were down in the yard. We heard how they were beaten by men we didn't know. We lay there, shaking from fear. When mum came back, she was only wearing her petticoat. Memory is a strange thing, but it's engraved on my memory how she was black and blue, her hair was dishevelled and she came back in only her petticoat. Birgitta Hellström.”<sup>449</sup>

Barbro Gustavsson, Birgitta Hellström's sister takes up the story:

“I ran out onto the balcony and saw how mum and dad were being beaten by the mob. Again and again. When dad saw me, he screamed at me to go inside. He was afraid that we'd be beaten up as well. Afterwards, my father and I went to my grandmother's. When we got there, we saw that the mob had attacked her as well. The first thing we saw when we arrived was that the front door was wrecked. They had gone in to find her and my uncle, who was 20 then. He'd been so afraid that he'd jumped out of the flat. He broke both his legs. My grandmother had been badly beaten with truncheons. My grandmother's furniture had been smashed to pieces, doors had knife marks and the wallpaper and doors were flecked with blood. My brother was also beaten up. He'd protected himself with a foot scraper. In the trial that followed he was sent to jail for assault. It's completely ridiculous that he was jailed when he was only protecting himself. In the trial, no consideration was given to the imbalance of power that marked what happened in Jönköping that summer.”<sup>450</sup>

Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström continue:

“The police did nothing to protect us. Nor did the men of the church do anything to stop the harassment or persecution. We attended Sunday school, but we have no memory of the teachers asking us about what had happened. The church was by the square in the centre of town. So the priest should have realised what was going on; since

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<sup>449</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström 13/9/2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

<sup>450</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström 13/9/2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

the mob that attacked us had gathered there, in that square, before making their way to our homes.”<sup>451</sup>

Many Roma left Jönköping after that summer, but not Barbro and Birgitta's family. They were unable to move from their house. They never talked about these events in the family. It was hushed up, while their parents made it clear that they would have to live a life that did not draw attention to them in any way. They knew that what happened in the summer of 1948 could happen again. The family retreated into itself. They lived in isolation and never spent time with anyone but their closest relatives.

“We lived for ourselves after that. We made absolutely no fuss. We kept ourselves to ourselves. We wanted to be left in peace.”<sup>452</sup>

Only in recent years has Barbro Gustavsson told others that she is a Traveller. At the beginning of their relationship, not even her husband knew. Barbro says that it was not uncommon for her to hear condescending comments about “tattare” and “gypsies” in different situations.

“I seethed with anger inside when they said bad things about my people. But I couldn't reveal who I was. I couldn't do it. I didn't want to be associated with the negative preconceptions and implications associated with ”tattare”. I wanted to be accepted for who I was. I've lived a life with two identities, or three. With my sister and her husband, I was myself. With my husband I was someone else. At work, I was someone else. It grieves me to think back on how I've been forced to live in this way in order to avoid abuse. I wish I could have lived my life as a Traveller.”<sup>453</sup>

### 5.3.3 Ludvika in 1956

The following section contains a further example of municipal praxis that made it impossible for Roma to settle permanently.

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<sup>451</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström 13/9/2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

<sup>452</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström 13/9/2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

<sup>453</sup> Interview with Barbro Gustavsson and Birgitta Hellström 13/9/2012. Ref. no. A2012/861/DISK.

In 1956, a party of eleven people were evicted from a bathing area in Ludvika where they had pitched their tent.<sup>454</sup> The police evicted them to a gravel pitch outside Borlänge without asking the owner for permission. The Roma were left with all their household goods in a location where they could not pitch a tent. The justification was that they had made the previous site look “untidy” and had disturbed the other guests and those who lived in the area. In support of their actions, the police cited a general police directive stipulating that they had the job of maintaining order and safety in public places.<sup>455</sup> An article in the newspaper *Dala-Demokraten* in June 1956 classified the incident as an abuse of power on the part of the police. The police officers involved in the eviction were convicted by the Svea Court of Appeal of official misconduct on 25 April 1959.<sup>456</sup> Selling believes that anonymous complaints and prejudicial views were the main cause of the Roma's eviction. The actions of the police at the local level were characterised by arbitrariness and a personal desire to wield power. Selling states that the Ludvika case sheds light on a number of issues concerning the significance of prejudice to the exercise of power at the local level and in police procedures.<sup>457</sup>

Some years prior to the Ludvika incident, the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 had begun an investigation into the housing conditions of Roma. The inventory of housing conditions indicated that only 220 of the 740 Roma registered in the country had a permanent home. The other 520 lived in tents, buses and caravans. An additional 15 children lived in foster homes and children's homes. The majority of the Roma who had been asked how they wanted to live replied that they wanted a permanent home.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>454</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 28. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>455</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 3. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>456</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 29. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>457</sup> Selling, Jan (2013), *Polisen och antiziganismen. En studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1948 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956], page 46. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

<sup>458</sup> SOU 1956:43, *Zigenarfrågan* [The gypsy question], page 13.

In a description of the regulations surrounding the issue of census registration, the Inquiry concluded that “non-existence” had disastrous consequences for individual families. The Inquiry's investigations indicated that not even those Roma who were registered on the census in a municipality had the same access to fundamental economic or political rights on the same terms as other inhabitants of Sweden. The regulations were described as complicated and based on the housing conditions of the majority population. The Inquiry was also of the opinion that the ability of Roma to protect their own interests was reduced by the fact that 70 per cent of the adult Roma population was illiterate. The Inquiry also argued that case law showed that it was frequently unwillingness or trivialities that determined whether or not a Roma family was entered in the parish register.<sup>459</sup> The Inquiry's review of the regulations and their consequences for the living conditions of Roma are presented in the following section.

#### **5.4 Census registration and parish registration in the 1950s**

The Population Registration Ordinance of 1946 contained regulations concerning the correct place for parish registration and census registration. Parish registration was a continuous form of population registration because as the population changed the records were updated. The parish register showed, as the name implies, which persons had been registered in the parish. It contained personal files on all those registered in the parish, and the register of non-existent persons listed all those who had lived in the parish but for various reasons had an unknown place of residence. Census registration was a periodical, recurrent registration of the country's population. It was conducted between 15 October and 20 December and its goal was to determine the demographic situation on 1 November each year. The primary rule concerning the correct place for parish registration was that all people were to be entered in the parish register in their place of

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<sup>459</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 16.

residence.<sup>460</sup> In addition, the register was to contain information about the property in which the person resided. If a person was not resident in a property, they would be registered to a property of the public authorities' choosing or simply as "registered in the parish". "Resident in" meant the place where the person in question regularly lived or if the person changed home, where they "regularly spent their night-time or equivalent rest".<sup>461</sup>

There were several exceptions to the primary rule. One of them was that every newborn baby would be registered at its place of residence at birth. Place of residence at birth was the parish in which the mother was registered when the child was born, or if the mother did not have a place of registration, in the parish where the child was born.<sup>462</sup> Another exception was that those who did not have a place of residence would be transferred to the register of "non-existent persons".<sup>463</sup> The issue of obtaining a place of residence through the census register or the parish register became a subject of investigation as it was not always obvious where or how people were to be registered. What guided the assessment of where a person was entered in the parish register was not necessarily where a person was actually entered in that register but rather where they should be registered.<sup>464</sup>

At the end of the 1940s and in the 1950s, Roma applied for the right to register for the census and, in a number of cases, raised the issue of the right to parish registration with the poor relief board. This led to a number of adjudications in the Administrative Court of Appeal. In a few cases, the Court decided that Roma had resided sufficiently long in a municipality – given that they had permanent jobs or some other permanent connection – that they should be entered in the parish register and thus included in the census. One example of this concerns a family's right to parish registration in Frysände Parish after the family had lived there in a caravan for a whole winter. The Court decided that they were to be entered in

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<sup>460</sup> Folkbokföringsförordningen [Population Registration Ordinance] 1946 (FBF), Section 13, Para. 1.

<sup>461</sup> FBF, Section 13, Para. 1.

<sup>462</sup> FBF, Section 14, Para. 7.

<sup>463</sup> FBF, Section 14, Para. 8.

<sup>464</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "PM angående rätt kyrkobokförings- och mantalsskrivningsort" [Memorandum concerning the correct place for parish and census registration] YK 506, Vol. 2, National Archives.

the parish register as the family had a permanent connection to the parish.<sup>465</sup> Another decision concerned a Roma musician who had lived in a tent for two months in one municipality, which was regarded as insufficient for entry in the parish register there. Another Roma family lived in Västervik from July to November 1951. The father's work involved trading in and plating copper vessels, which necessitated him being away from Västervik at times. The Administrative Court of Appeal decided that the family did not have the right to parish registration in Västervik because of "a lack of acceptable gainful employment".<sup>466</sup>

#### 5.4.1 The consequences of "non-existence"

The fact that many Roma were denied the right to national registration had tangible consequences, and not only financial ones, i.e. no child benefit or state pension. There were also social policy and democratic implications. Parish registration had significance in family law with regard to the possibility of marriage. Banns were generally posted in the parish in which the couple were registered. The man was also required to provide a certificate from the parish in which he was registered if it differed from the one in which his fiancée was registered. The certificate gave him the right to marry. This meant that people who had been designated as "non-existent" had difficulty getting married. Children whose parents had been designated as "non-existent" were regarded as illegitimate. Illegitimate children were always to be assigned a child welfare officer and, if the child's guardian was not registered in a Swedish parish, the child welfare board in the parish where the guardian lived would appoint a child welfare officer. As a rule, illegitimate children only inherited from their mother.<sup>467</sup>

For child benefit to be payable, the child had to reside in the country. The National Board of Health and Welfare, which issued

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<sup>465</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], Appendix 3, page 146; Memorandum to the Gypsy Inquiry by Administrative Court of Appeal Judge Erik Hedelius 12/5/1955, YK 506, Volume 4, National Archives.

<sup>466</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "PM till 1954 års zigenarutredning" [Memorandum to the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954] 12/5/1955, YK 506, Volume 4, National Archives.

<sup>467</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, "PM: Obefintlighetens verkningar" [Memorandum: The effects of non-existence], pages 2–3, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

guidance and instructions on the interpretation of social policy ordinances, stated that the prerequisite “resident in the country” meant the parish where the child was registered. Children who were entered into the register of non-existent persons were not regarded as registered in a parish and their parents were thus not eligible for child benefit. In exceptional cases, the municipality could provide child benefit to parents whose children had been temporarily transferred to the register of non-existent persons, but the benefit was “not intended to apply to children who have conducted a nomadic life and have therefore been entered as non-existent”.<sup>468</sup>

One requirement for a person to be entitled to payments from the public health insurance system, occupational injury insurance and mothers' assistance was that he or she had a permanent residence, which was in turn related to census registration.<sup>469</sup> Special child benefits to the children of widows and invalids and advance payment of benefits required the application to be dealt with in the place of census registration or where the child lived permanently. This generally meant that the child had been living in the municipality for such a long time that she or he had been entered in the parish register there.

In terms of housing policy, there were various benefits and loans such as settlement loans, own-your-own-home loans, improvement loans, family housing benefit and fuel benefit, but these too were intended for those in the municipality who had a permanent place of residence. An examination of the regulations that applied to loans and benefits has not revealed any fundamental barriers to Roma who wanted to settle permanently applying for them. Nevertheless, the regulations were designed in such a way that applicants would have to be known for their conscientiousness, economic prudence and willingness to save in order for their application to have a chance of being approved.<sup>470</sup> Given the above, there is much to suggest that those who had a

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<sup>468</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “PM: Obefintlighetens verkningar” [Memorandum: The effects of non-existence], pages 2–3, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>469</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “PM: Obefintlighetens verkningar” [Memorandum: The effects of non-existence], pages 6–11, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>470</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “PM: Obefintlighetens verkningar” [Memorandum: The effects of non-existence], pages 11–13, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.



permanent connection to the local community and lived in accordance with its norms could become known for possessing such qualities. A range of rules for poor relief also made it difficult for those who were not included in the census to obtain poor relief in the place they lived.<sup>471</sup>

### 5.4.2 Barriers to including Roma in the census

The Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 turned to local and regional authorities in order to find out how they had dealt with opportunities for Roma to register for the census and whether they had proposals for how this matter should be managed. The responses are presented below with the aim of showing what barriers affected opportunities for Roma to be included in the census and thus gain access to the associated benefits.

The County Administrative Board in Värmland County indicated several reasons that were also highlighted by other county administrative boards. It believed that the Roma way of life differed appreciably from that of the rest of the population. Roma had not acquired work in its “proper sense”, which had an impact on their reputation. The Roma way of life had also brought about a “local resistance” to including Roma in the census.<sup>472</sup>

One reason given by several public authorities was that there were formal barriers to including Roma in the census or entering them in the parish register in the municipalities. The District Judge in Skövde indicated, for example, that the Population Registration Ordinance required that each person be registered in their place of residence. The District Judge argued that because so many Roma were not settled, they should be registered for the census wherever they happened to be on 1 November. If they were no longer in the municipality by the next census registration period, they would be removed from the census register.

Another reason put forward by several public authorities was that Roma themselves were partly to blame for not being included

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<sup>471</sup> The Gypsy Inquiry 1954, “PM: Obefintlighetens verkningar” [Memorandum: The effects of non-existence], pages 13-19, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>472</sup> Response from the County Administrative Board in Värmland County to the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 on 16/5/1955, YK 506, Volume 7, National Archives.

in the census. The County Administrative Board in Skaraborg County argued that Roma people's "itinerant existence and short-term residence in various places in tents and caravans had put barriers in the way of ... census registration in a given municipality" even when they were living in the municipality on 1 November.<sup>473</sup> Vara District also responded to the Gypsy Inquiry that Roma were to blame for this situation. If Roma would only "conform to a normal Swedish life", the issue of including them in population registers would resolve itself.<sup>474</sup>

A third reason given by the public authorities was economic. The reason was declared to be "the economic and social perils foreseen as the potential result of such census registration".<sup>475</sup>

The Rector of Möja pointed out that there was not a single permanent resident of Möja who would rent a flat to Roma and no Roma would be able to survive winter in a tent.

"In addition, there are no opportunities for them to make a living. The primary industries are fishing and strawberry growing. In the latter case they would need land, in the former boats, tackle and preferably boathouses. It's unlikely they would be able to find land to rent and, as far as I am aware, fishing is hardly an occupation that would appeal to gypsies."<sup>476</sup>

Several responses from church and municipal representatives in Stockholm County include similar arguments to that of the Rector of Möja.<sup>477</sup> The parish civil registration offices in Lagga and Östuna

<sup>473</sup> Response to a circular from Skaraborg County on 13/4/1955 to the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954, YK 506, Volume 7, National Archives.

<sup>474</sup> Response to a circular from the District Tax Inspector in Vara on 31/3/1955 to the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954, YK 506, Volume 7, National Archives; cf. County Administrative Board in Värmland County to the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 on 16/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; Parish Registration Officer in the Diocese of Karlstad to the County Administrative Board in Värmland County on 4/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement from the District Tax Inspector in Lidingö-Täby to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 30/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement from the District Tax Inspector in Svartsjö to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 5/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>475</sup> The Child Welfare Clerical Officer in Mariestad to the County Accountant's Department in Skaraborg County on 1/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives. cf. response from the Parish Registration Officer in the Diocese of Skaraborg's third inspection area to the County Administrative Board in Skaraborg County on 29/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives

<sup>476</sup> The Rector of Möja's statement to the District Tax Inspector in Värmdö on 26/3/1955, YK 506, Volume 7, National Archives.

<sup>477</sup> Cf. the District Tax Inspector in Värmdö's statement to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 2/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement

submitted the following statement about why Roma were not entered in parish registers:

“Because there are usually only short periods between gypsies' moves from one parish to another, it is impossible to permanently enter them in the general parish register. Naturally, another contributory factor to this is the time-honoured perception among both local politicians and the population in general that gypsies are a potential case for poor relief that they would prefer not to have anything to do with.”<sup>478</sup>

The District Tax Inspector in Lidköping took up the municipal authorities' strategy for not needing to enter Roma in the parish register.

“As a rule, the municipal authorities would seem to ensure that none of the nomadic people are resident within the authority's area for such a period that census registration may come into question.”<sup>479</sup>

The local tax authority thus implied that the municipal authorities consciously ensured that Roma did not stay for such a length of time that they would be forced to enter them in the parish register. Another response with a clear opinion of Roma had been formulated by the Vicar of Valö, who felt it was unthinkable that Roma would be able to live with “Swedish agricultural labourers in a farming district”. In the vicar's opinion, agricultural labour was an occupation that was not intended for Roma. The results of Roma being included on the census in Valö would be “complications” and turn Roma into “notorious poor relief cases”. The representative of Valö Parish also asserted that the Roma psyche was such that “they could not thrive and live in one place, much less stay there and

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from the District Tax Inspector in Lidingö-Täby to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 30/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement from the Parish Registration Officer in the Northern Parish Registration District in Järfälla to the District Tax Inspector in Sundbyberg on 30/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement from the District Tax Inspector in Sundbyberg to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 5/4/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives; statement from the Dean of Seminghundra and Ärlinghundra Deanery to the District Tax Inspector in Svartsjö on 24/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives

<sup>478</sup> Statement by the Parish Registration Officer in Östuna to the County Administrative Board in Stockholm County on 26/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives. Similar opinions are expressed by the statement from the Parish Registration Officer in Länna to the District Tax Inspector in Central Roslagen on 25/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>479</sup> District Tax Inspector in Lidköping to the County Administrative Board in Skaraborg County on 24/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

work hard to support themselves as we Swedes do”.<sup>480</sup> Having dismissed a few other potential employment alternatives for Roma, the vicar got around to describing how he believed that the census registration and employment of Roma should be resolved. Roma should be allotted a suitable piece of land and establish small-scale manufacturing there. In addition, he believed that they could then be entered in the parish register in the colony thus established. The colony would be screened off from its surroundings:

“They should never mix with and never marry Swedish men and women! For they are a race apart with their own furnishings, food, way of life, own religion.”<sup>481</sup>

The vicar went on to say in his response that he was generally shocked at all the groups that had come to Sweden.

“Never put together any people of different nationalities in the same community! Just suppose: Here is a community with 10 Belgians, 30 Gypsies, 40 Frenchmen, 25 Poles and 50 refugees from Estonia? Imagine yourselves in the hell this would create. These people had nothing to do with one another, a different history, different guiding principles, none of them speak the same language, each babbled on in their own tongue. What a community! Imagine the discord and conflict there would be all day long!?”<sup>482</sup>

Some of the statements reveal a concept of race that is linked to a perception that the general public had a distinct awareness of rights that was difficult to reconcile with Roma being included in the census. For example, the District Tax Collector in Vara explained that the concept of residence in parish registration was firmly rooted in the public consciousness, particularly in the countryside, and that “the population react very strongly against those who lack a permanent home being registered in the parish or included in the census in the municipality”.<sup>483</sup> The District Tax Collector in Vara knew what he was talking about as a vicar in the district had

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<sup>480</sup> Statement from the parish registrar's office in Valö to the District Tax Inspector in Northern Roslag on 28/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>481</sup> Statement from the parish registrar's office in Valö to the District Tax Inspector in Northern Roslag on 28/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>482</sup> Statement from the parish registrar's office in Valö to the District Tax Inspector in Northern Roslag on 28/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>483</sup> The District Tax Inspector in Vara to the County Administrative Board in Skaraborg County on 31/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

allowed a Roma family to register in the parish. This resulted in the vicar having to endure:

“A great deal of harsh criticism from the population and municipal authorities because, for humanitarian reasons – partly to legalise a marriage and partly so that they would be able to enjoy social benefits such as child benefit – he had entered gypsies in the parish register.”<sup>484</sup>

The deputy vicar in Vidbo and Husby-Långhundra Parish also argued that Roma could not be afforded a place in Swedish society. According to the vicar's point of view, “the gypsy and tattare problem” should be addressed simultaneously since “they appear to the Swedish population to be fairly similar”.<sup>485</sup> He believed that the municipalities were hesitant to include Roma in the census because they were considered as “prospective poor relief cases”. In the vicar's opinion, however, the cause lay at a structural level:

“Their [the municipalities'] experience of their injurious influence on the population, especially young people, in terms of morality and way of life carries greater weight. If gypsy or tattare blood enters a Swedish family, tremendous harm and great suffering is inflicted on several future generations. The problem with gypsies should be solved by not doing anything that allows them to force their way into the body of the Swedish people. This should not reflect any racial hatred or racial discrimination but rather the desires of both peoples and for their own good. Some reservations with good housing and with the same social benefits as for other Swedish citizens should be allocated to these racial groups. From these, they could embark upon their wanderings, which they do not seem capable of doing without, but they would then have a fixed point to which they could always return. After all, organising housing conditions specifically adapted to the race occurs in many countries, but those conscious of their responsibility for the future of coming generations must refuse to pave the way for racial mixing, which has been shown to be perilous and ill fated for the country's sound development.”<sup>486</sup>

The Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 demonstrated through its questionnaire that municipal and church representatives' treatment of Roma conflicted with the applicable regulations on census

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<sup>484</sup> The District Tax Inspector in Vara to the County Administrative Board in Skaraborg County on 31/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>485</sup> Statement from Vidbo and Husby-Långhundra Parish Registrar's Office to the District Tax Inspector in Svartsjö on 29/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

<sup>486</sup> Statement from Vidbo and Husby-Långhundra Parish Registrar's Office to the District Tax Inspector in Svartsjö on 29/3/1955, YK 506, Vol. 7, National Archives.

registration. As described above, negative perceptions about Roma were behind decisions and measures that aimed to prevent them from being registered in the municipality in question. Furthermore, it appears that the actions and attitudes of county administrative boards and church representatives drove the exclusion of Roma. These measures were not consistent with the regulations, and monitoring was initiated to ensure that all Roma who had thus far lacked a place of census registration received one. Although the census registration issue was eventually resolved at the beginning of the 1960s, with an increasing number of Roma settling permanently in flats, the lack of rights resulting from non-existence came to affect the circumstances of a large proportion of the inter-war and early post-war generations. The census registration issue had long-term impacts in the form of a lack of suffrage, general benefits and a pension, making self-support more difficult.

Diana Nyman gives her view of the long-term effects that exclusion had on her mother.

“My mother and father met in Finland and moved to Sweden in the 1960s. They didn't get married in a church, they married in accordance with Roma culture and traditions. It didn't enter their world-view that they should turn to the Church of Sweden to get married. My parents lived in a world that signalled they were not welcome. They lived in a world that didn't welcome them with open arms. My father died a few years ago. This had consequences for my mother's ability to support herself, and when we contacted the public authorities we were given to understand that she didn't have the right to a widow's pension as she hadn't married my father in accordance with Swedish law. She lost out on a widow's pension. Exclusion has had consequences that we are still having to pay for with a lack of rights.” Diana Nyman<sup>487</sup>

Singoalla Millon paints a picture of Roma housing conditions in the first half of the 20th century and the impact of being driven away.

“The tents weren't homely. It was shabby. It wasn't practical to have too many bits and bobs as we weren't allowed to stay for long in the places we stopped. We were constantly driven away by police superintendents, landowners, farmers and members of the public. That's why we only had space for what was absolutely necessary, like cooking pots, musical instruments and equipment for tin-plating and preparing food. I don't know how many times I've been driven away.

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<sup>487</sup> Interview with Diana Nyman, 29 August 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

At the most we lived for maybe six months in one place, but usually it was just a couple of days. Sometimes just a few hours. And there were practical problems every time. Where would we go? Packing up took time, which we didn't get any for. No one who drove us away took into account the fact that there were also children living in the tent. It wasn't unusual for us to be driven away at night, so the children had to be woken and we had to move on. It was also not unusual for us to be disturbed by members of the public who came to the camp to threaten us or to see what we were up to. We were unwanted and accustomed to the discrimination. We didn't expect anything else. We were driven away from places others took for granted. Cafés, railway stations, streets and hospitals. We were unwanted everywhere. We knew nothing about our rights or what we could demand. It was also difficult to demand anything from society. Society gave out clear signals that it didn't want anything to do with us. This, how we were treated, and are still treated, explains why we have a mistrust of the public authorities. All our experiences of the public authorities show our mistrust is well founded." Singoalla Millon<sup>488</sup>

Mikael Demetri Taikon also paints a picture of the consequences of housing conditions.

"I was born outdoors in a camp in Norrbotten. For most of my childhood I lived in a Roma camp in Hammarbytäppan in southern Stockholm. It was hard. Around 7–8 families lived in Hammarbytäppan in old military barracks and many of them often had less insulation than a tent. There were cracks in them and it was draughty. It was cold and children died under these conditions. I would have had two sisters – twin sisters – but they froze to death in the tent when they were only a couple of months old. When my mother was in labour she went to the hospital. But she wasn't allowed to give birth there. 'We don't accept gypsy hags', they said. So she had to come back to the camp and give birth in a tent. Later, they froze to death." Mikael Demetri Taikon<sup>489</sup>

Rosa Taikon describes the effects poor housing conditions had on her chances of enjoying uninterrupted schooling.

"I grew up in hostile surroundings which saw children, mothers and fathers growing up and living in tents. We were unwanted and we were used to being treated badly. Children came up to us and threw stones, shouting Bloody gypsies. Gypsy vermin etc. Get out of here!' We had to live in absolutely disgraceful conditions. I don't know what was worse, the cold or the damp. Or the police persecution. The police

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<sup>488</sup> Interview with Singoalla Millon, 23 May 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>489</sup> Interview with Mikael Demetri Taikon, 6 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

came to our tent constantly and told us we couldn't live there any more, stood there watching over us while we packed up our things and made sure we moved on. It was the same old story again at the new place. The most important thing was that we went away. It was part of how we lived. We were constantly on the move. To a new place. In recent years, I've come to realise we were registered by the police. But we didn't notice it at the time. We had other things to think about. We were fighting for our survival. We didn't have freedom of movement. There were also times when we were disturbed by members of the public coming to the camp and threatening us. So we moved. We couldn't call the police when we were victims of crime. The police were against us and it was them who made sure we moved on to another municipality where we could pitch our tent for a couple of days or weeks. We lived on the work we mastered. Tin-plating, copper-smithing, funfairs, song and dance. Our housing conditions meant I couldn't get uninterrupted schooling. But the schools didn't welcome us, either. On one occasion I was able to go to school for about six months. I was eight and my father had got work tin-plating at a military base in Östersund. We were able to live in a house then. It was fantastic. When my father had finished his work we had to move and I had to leave the school and we weren't welcome in school in any of the places we then moved to." Rosa Taikon<sup>490</sup>

Sonya Taikon paints the following picture of housing conditions at the end of the 1960s.

"We got a home that was scheduled for demolition in Gothenburg when I was seven years old. It was warm and nice, but later on we had to move around and live in a caravan again. I remember that we lived in a park by the central station here in Gothenburg for two, three years. There was no toilet, no water, no electricity. We collected water from a stream in the middle of Gothenburg." Sonya Taikon<sup>491</sup>

Thereza Ericsson also describes how housing conditions in the 1990s and the lack of action have affected her circumstances.

"When I was a child, my family lived with my grandfather. When he died in 1991, I was thirteen and we had to move into a caravan. No one in the town cared. They'd shut themselves off from all feelings and all demands for rights. But that's not how I thought. I lived with my mum and dad and three siblings in a caravan for four years of my life and no one cared. That had a serious impact on me. I didn't get a place in any school in year seven or eight even though we asked and school attendance was compulsory. No one from the town asked where I was

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<sup>490</sup> Interview with Rosa Taikon 22 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>491</sup> Interview with Sonya Taikon 18 May 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.



during that period. We moved to different campsites, including one that was completely empty in winter apart from some addicts and a strange man who had filled his caravan with snakes. I remember really well when someone from the social services came to the Kungälv campsite. It was in the middle of winter and all she asked me was whether I was married. I was thirteen years old, living in a campsite and wasn't at school." Thereza Ericsson<sup>492</sup>

## 5.5 "Gypsies are not suited to life in the city"

The following section describes some characteristic conditions that Roma faced in the Stockholm housing market in the second half of the 20th century. There is much to suggest that the barriers described were not unique to Stockholm, but also applied to Roma in other parts of the country. Several Roma families moved to Stockholm in the 1940s. The city adopted a range of measures against one of the first Roma families that settled south of Stockholm in the summer of 1943. The aim of these measures was to induce the family to move back to the municipality they had come from. When they did not have the intended effect, the city arranged a lease for those living in tents and caravans over the subsequent winters.<sup>493</sup> When further Roma families and individuals came to Stockholm, the public authorities kept a low profile, which they justified with the argument that there was no point in arranging for electricity and water as the Roma would soon be moving on again anyway.

The historian Lena Ericsson, whose study focused on opportunities for Roma to find homes in Stockholm, concludes that it is probably closer to the truth to say that the city was not active in helping the families to find decent housing as it wanted to induce them to move out of the municipality of their own volunrariness. Roma who attempted to settle in Stockholm were directed to sites where they could pitch their tents or live in their caravans. These were far from built-up areas and schools, shops and employment opportunities. Stockholm Municipality believed, just as other Swedish municipalities did at that time, that Roma should

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<sup>492</sup> Interview with Thereza Ericsson 17 May 2013.

<sup>493</sup> Cf. e.g. Contract number 40522018, Stockholm City Real Estate Board, Lease, campsite for one family, on behalf of the city, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, F1:64.

be treated in such a way that they would choose to leave the municipality of their own accord. As was the case in many municipalities in the country, the local police authority in Stockholm was unfavourably disposed towards Roma settlement in the municipality. In a district report from 1950 it asserted that:

“gypsies are not suited to life in the city at all, least of all in a major city ... the camps constitute a serious threat to peaceful order and safety.”<sup>494</sup>

According to Ericsson, at the end of the 1940s there were a few camps with Roma settlements in Stockholm. The substandard housing conditions at the camps, together with the municipality's evident resistance to what was actually just a handful of people moving in, was key to the beginnings of a reorientation of “gypsy policy”.<sup>495</sup> As a result of the Gypsy Inquiry's (SOU 1956:43) conclusions, the City of Stockholm established a specific unit that worked with Roma. Public officials were appointed to act as a link between Roma and society and help guide them in their contacts with it. The post was known as “gypsy advisor”.

At the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, Stockholm Municipality began an “experiment” by offering flats to Roma. Ericsson argues that it was an experiment because many representatives from the public authorities doubted that Roma could settle permanently and look after a flat. The Real Estate Office, which was assigned the task of arranging permanent flats for Roma, stated in 1960 that the issue of housing conditions for Roma required coercive measures:

“Gypsies will probably not allow themselves to be fitted into society – if that is the aim – without a certain amount of coercion on the part of society.”<sup>496</sup>

<sup>494</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], pages 17–18. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>495</sup> Panu Pulma (2006), Suljetut ovet: Pohjoismaiden romanipolitiikka 1500-luvulta EU-aikaan [Closed doors: Nordic Romani policy from the 16th century to the EU era], pages 130–159.

<sup>496</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], pages 17–18. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

One consequence of the perceptions that existed about the group's needs and right to housing was that Roma were mainly offered flats on a trial basis or homes of a poor standard.<sup>497</sup>

The municipality's experiment was evaluated after a couple of years and it was concluded that the experiment had not been that successful as the flats assigned to Roma were of such a poor standard that they were barely habitable. The municipality established that of the 60 or so Roma families, only 14 lived in modern flats. Twenty-two families lived without hot water and central heating. A doctor who was involved in the evaluation stressed that these flats were of such a poor standard that it was preferable to live in caravans and barracks. Twenty-four families continued to live on campsites.<sup>498</sup>

Ericsson reveals that the City of Stockholm was aware that the negative perceptions of people around them affected conditions for Roma. Neighbours and landlords were found to be a reason why it was hard to arrange homes for the few Roma households that wanted to live in Stockholm.<sup>499</sup> Parallel to this, doubts were expressed as to the reasons why Roma did not enjoy the same rights in the housing market as other inhabitants and it was often said that the failings of Roma themselves were the explanation. What was characteristic of the 1960s was that the city authorities, despite being aware that Roma were met by a hostile environment, emphasised that they themselves were to blame for the problems that arose, in that the personal qualities and deficiencies attributed to them were deemed a result of their ethnicity.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the municipal measure of allocating flats on a trial basis was gradually abandoned. The aim instead was to provide flats of a higher standard. What was decisive in the local authorities' new approach was that municipalities were

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<sup>497</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>498</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012), Vem får bli Stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 19. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>499</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 20. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

now given state grants to arrange homes for Roma.<sup>500</sup> However, it took some time before the new approach had the intended effect. Landlords' negative attitudes towards Roma, a general lack of housing and Stockholm Municipality's considerable shortage of flats with three rooms or more contributed to the delay in changing the situation. Roma families lived in tents and caravans far into the 1960s. Landlords were openly resistant to having Roma as tenants and neighbours drew up petitions as they did not want to share a staircase with them.

“Neighbours were constantly on our case because we were Roma. They said we were thieving and they called us a bloody rabble and other abusive things. That was a part of my childhood. I was used to things like that.” Angelina Dimiter Taikon<sup>501</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970s, the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues observed widespread resistance to Roma tenancy.

“There is a great deal of resistance from both municipalities and from private and municipal housing companies to accepting gypsy families. There are instances of housing companies preferring to keep flats vacant rather than renting them out to gypsies.”

According to Ericsson, one factor that affected the housing environment for Roma and their chances of obtaining a home was that public housing companies in Stockholm had a practice of informing tenants that “a gypsy family will be moving into the building”. In addition, the tenants were informed about the composition of the family, i.e. that the family was made up of a man and woman, how many children there were and the children's ages.<sup>502</sup>

An investigation conducted by the Gypsy Section indicates that many of those Roma who were identified did not have their own home. Many were lodgers and homeless. A few lived in flats on a trial basis. It was also discovered that Roma from Finland were in an even worse housing situation, apparently different from that of

<sup>500</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) *Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden* [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 20. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>501</sup> Interview with Angelina Dimiter Taikon, 3 and 6 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>502</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) *Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden* [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

other Roma groups. For many of them, homelessness and lodging were said to be characteristic conditions.<sup>503</sup>

There was a policy in the City of Stockholm of discriminating against Finnish Roma, based on a fear of “mass immigration”. In a report, an official of the Gypsy Section said of the Roma’s situation in Finland that they “almost without exception lack a home or live in unsuitable homes. They have no chance in the difficult Finnish labour market”.<sup>504</sup>

Another communication describes severe deficiencies in the housing conditions of Roma. Nevertheless, there is still the perception that:

“[o]ffering these newly arrived families homes may lead to an increased flow of Finnish gypsies into Sweden.”<sup>505</sup>

“Some of the families with permanent homes are known and registered in the card index of gypsies in Stockholm, while others crop up in enquiries from various places.”<sup>506</sup>

Another communication argues that “a humane treatment of Finnish Roma would lead to a rapid increase in the flow of new Finnish gypsies”. It was presumed that this would lead to a burden on social services, a tendency towards segregation and further hostile reactions from the Swedish population.<sup>507</sup>

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<sup>503</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 22. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>504</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 24. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>505</sup> Communication concerning a communication from Social Welfare Inspector Filip Tegell, 7 March 1964, regarding the settlement of Finnish Roma, dat. 17 July 1964, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, F3 a:1, Page 2.

<sup>506</sup> Communication concerning a communication from Social Welfare Inspector Filip Tegell, 7 March 1964, regarding the settlement of Finnish Roma, dat. 17 July 1964, City of Stockholm Archives, Gypsy Section, F3 a:1, Page 1.

<sup>507</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 24. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

## 5.6 Control of housing for Roma

Public officials in the city identified the problem as being the Roma themselves, which is why the solution involved controlling their housing. Roma were to be kept away from one another and as far as possible to relinquish their Roma affiliation. The opinion that Roma were a bad influence on one another and should be kept apart by controlling their housing was expressed in a letter from the Gypsy Section to the Real Estate Office.

“Based on the social aspects of successfully assimilating the gypsy population into the general population, it is seen as vital that the gypsy families be located to general areas. The gypsy families should thus not be brought together in one place, separated from the rest of the population; on the contrary separate the gypsy families from each other and incorporate them into ordinary areas with the same conditions and obligations as other residents.”<sup>508</sup>

The flats offered to Roma at the beginning of the 1960s had two rooms, regardless of the family's size. The municipality applied an explicit control of Roma housing in terms of the location and size of flats. Ericsson writes that the aim was to minimise what the Gypsy Section defined as a disturbance problem. The fact is, the Section believed that if Roma were allocated larger flats, this would mean:

“a large gathering of gypsies who could easily get involved in quarrels with each other, resulting in disturbances to the detriment of the neighbours.”<sup>509</sup>

One effect of Roma being discriminated against in the housing market by being denied homes – and the Gypsy Section not allowing them to live where they wanted – was that many Roma solved their housing issues themselves. Overcrowding was a problem because there were no other solutions available, apart from living in the small flats allocated to Roma relatives. This led

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<sup>508</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 26. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>509</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 30. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

to wear and tear and a high level of noise, which irritated neighbours. Roma were blamed for the problems that arose.<sup>510</sup>

In this context it is important to point out that permanent settlement, which was the goal of the concerted political efforts prompted by the Gypsy Inquiry, had a price. It was officials from the Gypsy Section who dealt with contact between Roma and the relevant stakeholders in the community. The private lives of Roma were inspected and evaluated. Ericsson notes that the Gypsy Section could not decide what was a reasonable flat size for Roma and that there was experimentation in the decades following the 1950s, but without Roma themselves having the opportunity to influence their housing situation. Ericsson further notes that many Roma were evicted on very shaky grounds in the second half of the 20th century. He writes that the housing market was still difficult for many Roma towards the end of the 1970s. The public housing companies forced through a procedure whereby the social services were to sign contracts for flats for Roma on a trial basis. The blacklisting of unwanted tenants was commonplace, and at that time virtually all Roma living in Stockholm were blacklisted by landlords.<sup>511</sup>

A new type of lease allotted to Roma appeared in the 1980s. The background was that entry to the housing market became harder during the 1980s and landlords placed more stringent demands on tenants' ability to pay. One way for the municipality to resolve the resultant problem was that social services now became the holders of many of the flat leases allocated to Roma. These subleases were often for a short period and contained additional stipulations, for example that the tenants had to receive support and control in their home.<sup>512</sup>

As recently as 1985, the Real Estate Board in Stockholm adopted an action plan to combat residential disturbances. The

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<sup>510</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], pages 31-32. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>511</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], pages 27-28. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

<sup>512</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], pages 33 f. Ref. no. A2012/1448/DISK.

action plan stated that serious disturbances would be dealt with. The ethnic group that could cause disturbances was, according to the Board, Roma:

“There are also disruptions associated with certain ethnic groups. E.g. in certain gypsy families, specific living problems associated for instance with family size and cultural characteristics.”<sup>513</sup>

The action plan had the intended effect and had an impact on the chances of Roma getting a home. Ericsson establishes that the public housing companies, particularly Familjebostäder, rejected housing applications from Roma, regardless of their housing background, with specific reference to the action plan.<sup>514</sup>

## 5.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter describes some of the exclusion mechanisms that characterised conditions for Roma in Sweden in the 20th century. In the first half of the century, expelling Roma was a legitimate measure in many municipalities. The account also shows that the consequences were not unknown to those who formulated and applied this praxis. There is much to suggest that the negative consequences were the very aim of these decisions. The decisions affected all aspects of the lives of Roma and have had serious consequences for their chances of gaining access to education, work and self-support. Without a doubt, this goes some way towards explaining why many Roma still have a disadvantaged position in society.

Open or more or less hidden abuses are revealed in the attitude of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief towards the disappearance of Roma from the country; the extensive discrimination against Roma in Halland; the hostile attitude towards Roma evidenced by the events in Ystad, Jönköping and Ludvika; the unwillingness of municipalities to include Roma in the

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<sup>513</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 34.

<sup>514</sup> Ericsson, Lena (2012) Vem får bli stockholmare? Romer på den stockholmska bostadsmarknaden [Who is allowed to become a Stockholmer? Roma in the Stockholm housing market], page 34.



census, resulting in Roma being denied access to general welfare; the City of Stockholm's attempt to induce Roma to move on; the conditional nature of housing provision; and the suspicion and resistance shown by neighbours and landlords towards Roma as tenants. All this indicates that hostile perceptions about the group have been a general and extremely widespread phenomenon.

The national interest, in the form of the Gypsy Inquiry in the mid-1950s, led to measures being taken to provide Roma with permanent homes. However, the account shows that these measures failed to rectify the exclusion of Roma from the housing market. The discrimination and sense of living in a hostile residential environment affected and still affect conditions for many Roma.



## 6 Access of Roma to education

### 6.1 Introduction

For much of the 20th century, the school system in Sweden allowed types of schooling that varied internally in terms of their content and quality. The result was that pupils in the same age group did not have the same learning opportunities.<sup>515</sup> Folk school and secondary school, which were partly two parallel types of school, had differences in terms of educational goals, learning materials and premises. Up until the end of the 1930s, certain schools were permitted to offer teaching every other day and rural schools were often age-integrated.<sup>516</sup> Some folk schools were also permitted to offer teaching every other day and age-integrated classes up until the end of the 1930s. In many respects, it was geographical, social and economic circumstances that determined the type of school an individual pupil attended. This type of difference was levelled out following the reform of compulsory schooling in 1962 that introduced a common school education for all.<sup>517</sup>

Equality of opportunity was a key basis of Swedish education policy in the measures implemented with the introduction of comprehensive schooling in the 1960s and 1970s. School was a means by which to alter society, the aim being to achieve equality

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<sup>515</sup> An overview can be found in *Likvärdighet i en skola för alla. Historisk bakgrund och kritisk granskning* [Equivalence in a school for all. Historical background and critical review], Ingegerd Tallberg Broman, Lena Rubinstein Reich and Jeanette Högström (Eds.) (2002).

<sup>516</sup> Christina Florin & Ulla Johansson (1993), "Där de härliga lagrarna gro ...": Kultur, klass och kön i det svenska läroverket 1850–1914 ["Where the glorious laurels grow ... Culture, class and gender in Swedish grammar schools 1850–1914"], pp. 276 ff.

<sup>517</sup> Fredriksson, Viktor (Ed.) (1950), *Den svenska folkskolans historia* [History of Swedish elementary schooling], part 5; *det svenska undervisningsväsendet 1920–1942* [the Swedish education system 1920–1942].

between different social groups. Equivalent education involved providing all pupils with the same access to schooling, with compensatory allocation to ensure that all pupils actually had the same opportunities.

This chapter describes the access of Roma to education. The account is based on an examination of the specific policies that affected Roma children's schooling in the 20th century, primarily a review of archive material and the report *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970] by Thom Axelsson. By way of background, the chapter begins with some Roma's accounts of their experiences of school.

## 6.2 Roma experiences of school

Many of those interviewed have described how discrimination and offensive verbal abuse were recurring features of their schooling.

“When I started school, my teacher knew that I was a Traveller and already on my first day showed what she thought of me. That first day at school began with all of us having to stand in a line and greet the teacher before we were allowed to go in and sit in our places. When I came forward, she inspected my hands in a way she hadn't with the other pupils and said to me that I had to go and wash them before I could go and sit in the classroom. The next day, we had to stand in line and greet the teacher again. Once again she found fault with the cleanliness of my hands and said that I had to go and wash them. This happened every day and after a while she didn't need to say that I had to go and wash my hands. She just needed to point to the corridor and I would understand what I had to do. I scrubbed my hands with a brush every day before I went to school. But it didn't help. It didn't matter how clean my hands were, I had to wash before I was allowed into the classroom. In the fourth year, I got a new teacher. And this new teacher was strict. I was beaten a lot. One of the first lessons he gave, he called me to his desk where he wanted me to stand. I had to stand in front of my classmates while he gave a lecture about “tattare”. This included him urging the pupils to be careful of me and he said they could be infected by me if they were near me. A couple of years later I had to start a new class, it was some sort of remedial class. There were 10–12 children in this class and I knew a few of them. They were Traveller children as well. There was one teacher though who realised that I wasn't in the right place. He made sure that I was able to change to a new school and that was a fresh start. Everything changed. No one there knew who I was and so I didn't need to deal with teachers and pupils who had preconceived ideas about me and my

family. I did well there. I was happy there and was praised for my performance. I had previously been given failing grades in all subjects. Now I got good grades and in some subjects I even got the grade pass with distinction.” Stig-Ove Lundahl<sup>518</sup>

“I was always afraid in school. I was the only Roma pupil. My teacher in middle school couldn't deal with me. She sent me to a psychologist who prescribed sedatives. I was too happy and lively. I understood later, when I went into teaching myself, that this was because I was understimulated. The teacher sent me away because I was Roma, I believe. She probably wasn't that fond of me.” Angelina Dimiter Taikon<sup>519</sup>

“Everyone at school knew we were tattare. The teacher subjected me and my five siblings to discrimination and didn't give us the support and teaching we had a right to. We were all placed in a remedial class. It was unfair and we felt like rejects. They must have thought we weren't of sound mind, that we were an divergent group. Every day at school I had to struggle not to be pushed down. That's just the way it was. I was called a tattare and had to deal with other verbal abuse. Tattare was a word used habitually to define me and to make me understand my place in the school, in society. In that way I had to learn to be quiet and not speak out. We would keep out of the way, which also became our survival strategy. Even my brother was considered dim-witted. He was singled out and classed as stupid. He was eventually moved into a normal class. I don't really know why or how he managed it, there was probably a teacher who recognised that he was in the wrong place, that he wasn't stupid. He was able to pick up the knowledge he had missed out on when he was in the remedial class. He completed compulsory school with the highest grades and is now a manager in the municipality.” Rose-Marie Wallengren<sup>520</sup>

Singoalla Millon was 35 years old when she learned to read and write.

“It was only as an adult that I learned these things that I should have learned as a child. I felt ashamed when it came out in contacts with the public authorities that I couldn't read or write. I felt stupid. I tried to get into school several times when I was a child. But it was impossible. We weren't welcome. I remember how the teachers screamed that they didn't want any gypsies in their school. But I was able to go to school when I was 14, although it still turned out to be an impossible situation. I was only there a couple of months. We lived by the BJ

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<sup>518</sup> Interview with Stig-Ove Lundahl, 5 June 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>519</sup> Interview with Angelina Demeter Taikon, 2 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>520</sup> Interview with Singoalla Millon, 25 May 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

halls, just by the central station in Gothenburg. We lived in caravans then. The police came and wanted to move us on, but my brother Oscar went to the municipality and managed to get a lease that gave us permission to live in caravans on allotted sites. However, this lease was conditional on us going to school. So we were allowed to stay in our caravans by the railway station if we also went to school. I had to start in year one. I remember that first day well. When I got to school, I stood by the door of a classroom with pupils who were 7–8 years old. I was tall for my age and I was definitely much taller than my classmates. The pupils thought I was a teacher.” Singoalla Millon<sup>521</sup>

“My schooling was non-existent. I was put in a remedial class, there was nothing else for us Travellers. But we often had to work instead of going to school. Rake, dig, hack with a pickaxe and what not. I completed my schooling as an adult.” Kurt Magnusson<sup>522</sup>

“I had to start school when we got a home. I was ten years old at the time and I have bad memories of school. It was horrible. The teacher put me and my cousin right at the back of the classroom. We got no help to bring us up to the level of the class or the teaching. It was difficult to keep up and understand what was said in the lessons. We sat right at the back and spoke Romani with each other. We were often subjected to verbal abuse such as “gypsy scum” or “you bloody gypsy runt”. There was violence as well, sometimes. We bought sweets and cigarettes for classmates so they wouldn't set about us. You could say that we bought their friendship. One particularly memorable event has seriously affected my attitude to school. After a gym lesson, the gym teacher forced me to take off my clothes. I had grown up with Roma morals, under which it is taboo to undress in front of anyone else, especially strangers. The teacher grabbed me by the ear and tried to force me into the shower. I never wanted to go to gym class again after that.” Mikael Demeter Taikon<sup>523</sup>

### 6.3 The Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief

The preceding chapters describe the public debate about Roma and how these conceptions led to specific measures targeting Roma. One line of argument was that the Roma way of life and hereditary characteristics could damage society in the same way as an

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<sup>521</sup> Interview with Singoalla Millon, 23 May 2012. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>522</sup> Interview with Kurt Magnusson, 1 June 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>523</sup> Interview with Mikael Demeter Taikon, 3 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

infection damages health. Another perception was that Roma children were exposed to their parents' destructive and antisocial behaviour, and as a result lived an undesirable life outside society. One example of such a preconception is found in an opinion put forward by the National Board of Health and Welfare at the beginning of the 1940s about a report on the investigation into the "tattare problem":

"With particular reference to the children, it is clear that they completely lack the upbringing to live a regular life that one would hope could make them useful members of society. Instead, thanks to their families' itinerancy and through begging and pilfering, they are accustomed to an indolent life."<sup>524</sup>

Twenty years prior to this opinion, the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief had described Roma children as being seriously maladjusted because of bad conditions in the home. Another perception was that Roma failed to attend school or neglected it. The Committee based this on a compilation of responses from a survey of the country's police districts indicating that barely one thousand Roma children under 16 were living in Sweden. Half of the responses indicated that children followed the ordinary curriculum in a satisfactory way. However, the other half contained negative opinions about the children's school attendance and upbringing.<sup>525</sup>

In Jönköping County, which according to the inventory had the largest group of Roma in Sweden, it was only Jönköping City that found the children's school attendance inadequate.<sup>526</sup> Other districts in the county offered the opinion that Roma children attended school regularly or offered no opinion at all.<sup>527</sup> In 9 of 24

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<sup>524</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning the investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs on 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

<sup>525</sup> Survey responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 213, HV, National Archives.

<sup>526</sup> Survey responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief from Jönköping City to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 213, HV, National Archives.

<sup>527</sup> Survey responses from Eksjö Rural District, Säfsjös Rural District, Skillingaryd Rural District, Långaryd Rural District, Markaryd Rural District, Eksjö Urban District, Grenna Urban District, Nässjö Urban District, Värnamo Urban District to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 213, HV, National Archives.

counties, there was a perception that the children should be taken into care and brought up at special facilities.<sup>528</sup> One county proposed that adult Roma be sent into forced labour, which would also mean, indirectly, that their children would be taken into care.<sup>529</sup> Two counties proposed sterilisation and nine proposed measures restricting Roma's freedom to do business and move around.<sup>530</sup>

A review of the responses from other counties reveals a similar situation. Responses from police districts that did not have any negative opinions were not commented on and were not included in the Committee's account of what was the problem with Roma.<sup>531</sup>

Following this report, demands for action abated at the state level, only to be brought up the agenda again because of a communication by the National Inspector of Poor Relief and Child Welfare. The Inspector came to adopt the ideas promoted by the Committee. One opinion was that Roma families' itinerant existence affected the children's chances of regularly attending school. The Inspector also believed that the activities in normal schools or in facilities for children who had been taken into care were jeopardised by Roma as their "disruptive conduct provoked anxiety among the other children".<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>528</sup> The counties that proposed taking children into care were Östergötland, Kronoberg, Blekinge, Kristianstad, Malmö, Halland, Älvsborg, Värmland and Västernorrland, cf. survey responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 213, HV, National Archives.

<sup>529</sup> Survey responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 214, HV, National Archives.

<sup>530</sup> Cf. survey responses to the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, YK 214, HV, National Archives; SOU 1923:2, Förslag till lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 340–355; Cf. The chapter Registration of Roma in this White Paper.

<sup>531</sup> See more about this in this White Paper's chapter Registration of Roma.

<sup>532</sup> Communication from G H von Koch to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs on 3/12/1934, Proceedings of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' Council, 25/9/1942, no. 101, page 1, National Archives; cf. the chapter Registration of Roma which describes how the Inspector's communication was prepared by means of a referrals procedure and contributed to continued registration.



## 6.4 The school question is investigated and experiments begin

As has already been described, county administrative boards, child welfare boards, poor relief boards and vicars contacted the National Board of Health and Welfare at the beginning of the 1940s. They demanded that the Board take measures to adapt Roma to society and that it investigate a proposed solution for the schooling of Roma.<sup>533</sup> These communications led to the Board once again publishing an opinion stating that this “population element” had constituted a social problem for around four centuries. It claimed that Roma had a preference for isolation and an ability to avoid the attentions of the public authorities.

“By way of example, it may be mentioned that the regulations regarding compulsory school attendance are of little importance to them. To a very great extent, they keep their children away from school with its teaching and rearing. To a great extent, they similarly avoid the measures incumbent on the child welfare board. This frequently presents problems, which, unsurprisingly, a child welfare board is unable to overcome. Also, because of their antisocial behaviour they often create a veritable state of uncertainty for other citizens and constitute a heavy financial burden on society. To an alarming degree, they are found in our prisons, forced labour institutions, institutions for alcoholics and psychopaths, and other similar facilities.”<sup>534</sup>

The National Board of Health and Welfare also found it troubling that certain groups could live in “a kind of state of emergency that promotes the raising of parasitic citizens”. Besides the insecurity

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<sup>533</sup> Communication from Skaraborg Poor Relief Association to the Royal Board of Health and Welfare on 13/7/1942, FXÖ:3, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, National Archives; communication from Vendel Child Welfare Board to the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor in the First District on 23/11/1942; communication from Grum Poor Relief Board to the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor in the Sixth District on 14/8/1942, FXÖ:4, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, National Archives; communication from the National Poor Relief and Child Welfare Advisor in the Fifth District to the National Inspector of Poor Relief and Child Welfare on 8/2/1942; “Memorandum regarding the plan for an investigation concerning tattare and gypsies”, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:4, National Archives.

<sup>534</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning the investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs on 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

said to be created among the general public, the Board was also given cause to act “with reference to the quality of the population”.<sup>535</sup>

Following the Board's registrations of Roma in the 1940s, biological and deterministic perceptions about the group were gradually replaced by a perception that it was the environment that conditioned the circumstances of Roma. This basic premise meant that there were opportunities to change the group by making the environmental conditions more beneficial through education and upbringing. Accordingly, there was an increase in measures facilitating Roma access to education and placing demands on their fulfilment of compulsory school attendance. The measures varied depending on how the public authorities categorised Roma; it was accepted that Traveller children could be afforded access to folk school and the various forms of special education developed within the compulsory school system. For other Roma groups, forms of schooling that were outside the school system proper were planned in the first instance. The following section describes how these separative practices were justified and how the teaching for Roma came to be designed.

In the mid-1930s, a Roma man wrote a letter to the National Board of Education in which he called attention to Roma children's need of schooling. He maintained that Roma were denied access to school and that the public authorities completely ignored Roma children's right to education. The letter included proposals for Roma to be brought into the process in order to help Roma children acquire an education. One proposal was that a Roma person be employed as a supervisor.<sup>536</sup>

The National Board of Education examined the question and, having circulated it for comment, decided that Roma schooling should be given due attention. Roma, like the rest of the Swedish population, were obliged to go to school. However, their children were not to go to normal schools, which the Board justified on the

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<sup>535</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning the investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs on 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

<sup>536</sup> National Board of Education regarding schooling for the Swedish gypsies' school-age children on 21/12/1934, National Board of Education, Elementary School Division, B 1a, Volume 220, National Archives.

basis of an assumption about the nomadic Roma way of life. In addition, it argued that “normal” schooling could not be provided for Roma because of:

“the great disparity, in almost every respect, between gypsy children and children from normal Swedish homes. Particularly from a psychological viewpoint, but also from a disciplinary one, an arrangement of that kind would, in most cases, surely lead to great difficulties for children, teachers and school authorities”.<sup>537</sup>

Furthermore, the Board stated that:

“as long as gypsies continue with their current way of life [there is] no [chance] of achieving a favourable merging of gypsy children and other children in the same schools”.<sup>538</sup>

Roma would instead be offered an education that was similar to that offered to the children of nomadic Sami. Special teachers were appointed at these schools, and they had specific instructions as to what sort of schooling the children should have access to. For Roma, this would mean that teachers followed them on their travels and provided teaching in line with special regulations. These regulations would be drawn up “with reference to the special purposes the teaching would serve”.<sup>539</sup> The National Board of Education's proposal came to nothing.

About ten years after the aforementioned letter, the issue of Roma access to schooling came to the fore again, as a result of the National Board of Health and Welfare's inventory of 1944. One solution then advanced was the establishment of separate approved schools where the children would receive teaching and control for the whole of their time in school.

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<sup>537</sup> National Board of Education regarding schooling for the Swedish gypsies' school-age children on 21/12/1934, p. 351, National Board of Education, Elementary School Division, B Ia, Volume 220, National Archives.

<sup>538</sup> National Board of Education regarding schooling for the Swedish gypsies' school-age children on 21/12/1934, p. 351, National Board of Education, Elementary School Division, B Ia, Volume 220, National Archives. 220, National Archives

<sup>539</sup> National Board of Education regarding schooling for the Swedish gypsies' school-age children on 21/12/1934, p. 352, National Board of Education, Elementary School Division, B Ia, Volume 220, National Archives.

## 6.5 Separate approved schools for Roma

The National Board of Health and Welfare's inventory and survey of Roma in 1944 indicated that 15 per cent of all Roma children who had the right to go to school could read and just over 12 per cent could write.<sup>540</sup> It was established that many Roma were illiterate, which caused the public authorities to spotlight the educational circumstances of Roma once again. Establishing a separate boarding school for Roma children, a move previously discussed by the National Board of Education, had already been proposed by the School Inquiry of 1940.<sup>541</sup>

“Approved schools of the type that may be applicable here, are, as we know, established and maintained by municipalities and also – for nomadic schoolchildren – by the state. The experience gained of such homes should largely guide the institutions now in question. At the approved schools for nomads, teaching is provided in government schools located next to the boarding house. It is a moot question whether or not the same system should also be applied in the approved schools intended for gypsy children.”<sup>542</sup>

The School Inquiry believed that this type of school was preferable if the intention was to provide children with regular teaching. However, the National Board of Health and Welfare was unable to support the School Inquiry's proposal. It argued that the school issue could not be assessed in isolation, but “rather it should be solved in connection with other measures to adapt the nomadic Swedish gypsies into society”.<sup>543</sup> One of these measures was to solve the housing issue, which was considered especially important:

“An elementary civilising measure is for them to be permitted to enjoy schooling to the extent that they gain a passable proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic. The prerequisite for such an education is not merely that the teaching is arranged but also – and the National Board

<sup>540</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's opinion on the account from the Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation concerning measures to incorporate gypsies into society, 5/3/1948, p. 4, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

<sup>541</sup> “Memorandum regarding measures and proposals thereof on the gypsy question”, 7/3/1946, p. 13, The Gypsy Investigation of 1954 (YK 506), Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>542</sup> The School Inquiry of 1940 regarding the schooling of gypsies' children, 7/5/1946, YK 506, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>543</sup> “Memorandum concerning the gypsies' school issue with suggestions and communications (undated) 1945, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

of Health and Welfare wishes to specifically stress this – that good environmental conditions are created for children in the form of permanent accommodation and good homes. Experience shows that permanent settlement is fundamental to all cultural activities and for social adjustment to society.”<sup>544</sup>

The National Board of Health and Welfare believed that permanent settlement was crucial to social adjustment. It argued that it had been shown that those Roma who had a more permanent home were more like the rest of the population in terms of employment circumstances, schooling and social relationships. The Board emphasised that the “adaptation [of Roma] to a normal social life” was an important concern of society as Roma tended to attract other “antisocial individuals”, which was due to their low social standing. However, the outlook for Roma culture was, according to the Board, not the best. This was because as the number of Roma increased due to their high fertility, their chances of supporting themselves in a traditional way decreased. Consequently, the issue could not be solved without a methodical social adjustment of Roma because they were not capable of improving their living conditions themselves.<sup>545</sup> The Board also expressed the following concerning the education and upbringing of Roma:

“The unsatisfactory conditions in which the children live is a particularly difficult matter. Their upbringing and education is not conducive to their incorporation into society and social equality with other Swedish citizens. Although they are obliged to attend school, they receive an extremely deficient education – if they receive one at all. The environmental conditions in the home or, more correctly, housing camp, and the upbringing they receive there must be considered, from a social perspective, extremely unsatisfactory, even with regard to the distinctive nature of their traditions. The children are further exploited by the adults in a way that would strongly challenge public opinion if it were a question of children in Sweden other than those of the gypsies. As gypsy children, they seem to be

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<sup>544</sup> Opinion of the National Board of Health and Welfare regarding school teaching for gypsies' children to the Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs, 20/5/1947, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

<sup>545</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's opinion on an account concerning measures to incorporate gypsies into society, 5/3/1948, pp. 3–4. National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

without rights and to be outside the law, despite formally being subject to it.”<sup>546</sup>

For these reasons, the Board was more inclined to organise mobile schools close to the homes or to allow Roma to attend compulsory school on a trial basis. An expert attached to the Board shared this view, expressing several objections to the idea of a boarding school.

“[T]his type of school would have the effect of conserving the gypsies' nomadic life, which would in turn involve both social and economic risks for society. b) Bringing together 40 gypsy children of various ages in one and the same school would ... impose ... very difficult disciplinary problems on the school authorities. One must bear in mind that these children are “brought up” in a completely different way to Swedish children ... c) This form of school would further prevent gypsy children from benefiting from the valuable environmental influence they would, for example, receive in a normal Swedish folk school. This environmental influence is absolutely necessary for the rapid and successful assimilation of gypsies into Swedish society. d) ... Separating parents and children in the manner proposed by the School Inquiry would thus cause them mental suffering and would certainly lead to the parents keeping their children away from the schools. Boarding schools would also be disrupted by parental visits. e) Finally, it would be very difficult to attract qualified teaching staff to schools of this type.”<sup>547</sup>

Instead, the expert argued that Roma should be offered places in normal folk schools. This proposal was the only one that made possible an effective environmental influence. In folk schools, the pupils could partake of the discipline and order they badly needed. In addition, this proposal would be cheap to implement as no specially trained teachers would be required.<sup>548</sup>

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<sup>546</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's opinion on an account concerning measures to incorporate gypsies into society, 5/3/1948, pp. 3–4, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

<sup>547</sup> Memorandum at the request of a head of a subdivision at the National Board of Education, 17/3/1947, pp. 2–3, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

<sup>548</sup> Memorandum at the request of a head of a subdivision at the National Board of Education, 17/3/1947, pp. 3–4, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, FXÖ:3, National Archives.

## 6.6 Mobile teaching

Parallel to the discussion about separate approved schools, an experiment was conducted involving the teaching of Roma pupils. The Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation was the driving force behind this experiment. The Foundation was formed in 1945 by several Christian Free Church associations and organisations and came to take charge of an enterprise that:

“works towards improving the spiritual and material situation of Swedish gypsies”.<sup>549</sup>

The enterprise was said to be directed at all Roma “who strive to be good citizens”.<sup>550</sup> The Foundation had the explicit missionary objective of rousing the slumbering religious life of Roma:

“Without God, without home and without fatherland, they are spread throughout our world. Yes, they are so homeless that their language, which is a variant of Indian Sanskrit, does not even have a word for 'pray' or 'home', but has no less than five words for the term 'walk or wander’.”<sup>551</sup>

The Foundation's work was funded by state<sup>552</sup> and, with the help of “evangelism”, the Foundation's activities would incorporate Roma into Swedish society.

It was thought that the teaching would meet the need for Roma to acquire a basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic. It was intended that this type of school would adapt its activities to what was assumed to be the self-chosen Roma way of life, and would primarily be open in the summer. One consequence of the mobile school was that teaching often took place outdoors, often with meagre equipment procured in haste as a result of planning difficulties and the limited financial resources the Foundation had at its disposal. Also, the schooling was conducted in various places,

<sup>549</sup> Regulations of the Gypsy Mission in Sweden Foundation, Section 1, YK 506, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>550</sup> Regulations of the Gypsy Mission in Sweden Foundation, Section 1, YK 506, Volume 1, National Archives

<sup>551</sup> Letter from the Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation to mission representatives, 27/2/1948, Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation Archive, Volume 1, (outgoing documents), National Archives.

<sup>552</sup> Letter from the Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation to mission representatives, 27/2/1948, Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation Archive, Volume 1. (outgoing documents), National Archives.

which should be seen as a consequence of municipalities driving Roma away. A report from one teacher contains the following description of the teaching conditions:

“The camp consisted of eight caravans and two tents, accommodating 28 people in all. As usual, all the caravans were arranged in a ring so that a large open circle was created in the middle. When the weather was conducive, lessons were conducted in this place. Thus it became an open-air school. When it rained, the camp placed a caravan at our disposal. There were no desks, but we had plywood boards which were used instead. When we had lessons outside we had to borrow tables from the gypsies.”<sup>553</sup>

An examination of the written materials left behind from the mobile school reveals that the teaching content was strikingly basic. Children who should have been in both fifth and sixth year in folk school were being taught the names and sounds of the letters of the alphabet. Naturally, the level of teaching was affected by numerous conditions such as the fact that Roma spent much of their time trying to make a living and find somewhere to live, and the fact that the children had not been to school before, despite having had the right to. The teaching was also affected by the fact that it was temporary. In addition, the Foundation lacked prior knowledge of the pupils' level when they began the enterprise. The teaching appears to have sought to provide general knowledge that Roma were not assumed to have and that the Foundation believed they should have.

One result of this was that teaching materials, in the usual sense, were seldom used. As well as learning to read, the pupils were occupied in signing their name, learning to search in a phone book, writing receipts, completing postal forms, basic mental arithmetic, learning the importance of punctuality and discipline, and how to deal with various public authorities. The general orientation in everyday skills received by the pupils illustrates how the Foundation perceived Roma culture and living conditions and which skills the Foundation believed Roma could be expected to need. Much of the teaching was devoted to practising skills that were presumed to make the traditional Roma occupations easier.<sup>554</sup>

<sup>553</sup> Teacher's Report, 10/9/1952, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>554</sup> E.g. “Report on the gypsy school in Flysta”, undated, 1958, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives; David Sjögren, ”Att undervisa de andra: studier av



However, the teaching involved not just knowledge of specific subjects and training in practical skills, but also social education. The aim of the teaching was to correct the children's living patterns, i.e. teach them to be punctual, wash and mend clothes and take care of their hygiene. Much of the teaching time that could have been devoted to school subjects was replaced with zealous social rearing. The mobile teacher also took care of contacts with the public authorities and individuals who the Roma came into contact with.<sup>555</sup>

After only a couple of years, the Foundation came to the conclusion that the mobile teaching had not been satisfactory. Quite simply, there were too many day-to-day problems in the camps to provide a good standard of teaching, it was believed.<sup>556</sup> Consequently, the Foundation attempted to induce the state to pay for a separate boarding school for the 140 school-age Roma children.<sup>557</sup> The proposal however was rejected.

One of the issues investigated by the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954 was Roma children's access to school and the achievements of mobile teaching were evaluated as part of this. The evaluation pointed to several deficiencies. This type of school had not achieved the results that could have been expected.<sup>558</sup> However, the Gypsy Inquiry concluded that the mobile teaching demonstrated an important factor that should guide decision-makers: Roma were educable and thus had the potential to be integrated into the compulsory school system.<sup>559</sup>

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lärarrapporter från den ambulerande zigenarskolan mellan 1946 och 1958" [Teaching the others: studies of teacher's reports from the mobile gypsy schools between 1946 and 1958] in Esbjörn Larsson (Ed.) *Ny utbildningshistorisk forskning – tio bidrag från Nationella forskarskolan i utbildningshistoria*, Uppsala [New research in the history of education – ten contributions from the National Graduate School in the History of Education, Uppsala], 2008.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. e.g. "Årsberättelser över stiftelsen Svensk Zigenarmissions verksamhet år 1958" [Annual report of the Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation 1958], National Board of Health and Welfare, FXÖ:4, National Archives.

<sup>556</sup> Cf. e.g. Sigrid Öhman's statement of 19/9/1944; Memorandum regarding measures and proposals thereof on the gypsy question, page 10, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>557</sup> Memorandum regarding measures and proposals thereof on the gypsy question, page 12, YK 506, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>558</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], pages 51–53.

<sup>559</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], page 55, The Second Chamber's General Drafting Committee, no. 11, 1953, pages 2–3.

However, the Inquiry believed that individual schools were free to decide for themselves how to organise and implement teaching for Roma. Classroom instruction was not the only option. Roma children's schooling could be based on the rules, learning goals and schedules that existed at that time for special education and that applied to special remedial teaching for children regarded as “retarded”, children with speech, reading and writing difficulties and for Swedish language teaching for children born abroad and stateless children. The Inquiry thus proposed that Roma pupils be separated out into special teaching groups and that there should be a departure from the principle of a complete school education. According to the proposal, the municipalities would be obliged to accept Roma within the school district and receive state compensation for costs associated with integrating Roma in special education.<sup>560</sup>

As noted above, the mobile teaching enterprise was funded by state. This was mainly justified by it being an experiment, that would make do until a better alternative could be offered.<sup>561</sup> The teachers wrote reports about Roma children's cognitive abilities, and also about everyday events in the camp. Through the teachers, information about the lives of Roma, judgements about their morals, diligence and customs were spread to a circle that made decisions about their future educational opportunities. This probably took place without the knowledge of Roma and without anyone questioning the appropriateness of an educational enterprise also having such reporting as part of its activities.

## 6.7 Teaching in remedial class

At the beginning of the 20th century, it became increasingly common to measure pupils' aptitude and use the results to stream them into different classes. Factors including meritocratic ideals

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<sup>560</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], pages 52–59

<sup>561</sup> Opinion of the National Board of Health and Welfare regarding school teaching for gypsies' children, 20/5/1947, p. 2, National Board of Health and Welfare, FXÖ:3, National Archives; The National Board of Education argues in a statement in response to a motion in the Riksdag in 1953: “The mobile enterprise should be regarded as a concession in the face of the actual conditions that prevail”, The Second Chamber's General Drafting Committee, no. 11, 1953, pages 5-6.

drove this development; ideals that assumed that ancestry and economic position should not decide individuals' educational level. Researchers used scientific methods to argue that they could group pupils bases on intellectual ability, making it easier to sort them into teaching and educational establishments that suited them. The idea was that citizens with good intellects would guide the nation towards increased prosperity. During the population crisis of the 1930s, interest in these methods soared since a declining rate of population growth necessitated the best possible utilisation of the nation's resources. Politicians and researchers maintained that the masses, who had not previously had access to higher education, possessed hidden talents that could now be flushed out using scientific methods. Notions about what may be called the economisation of human capital were combined with ideas about the importance of putting the right man in the right place.<sup>562</sup>

A classification based on cognitive ability was introduced. These methods were also considered useful for determining who the inferior individuals were. Intelligence tests began to be used to sift out pupils from folk school into remedial classes and teaching for the mentally deficient.<sup>563</sup> Weak aptitude was regarded as a risk factor for criminality as those with such an aptitude were assumed to have an inferior capacity for grasping the extent of the damaging effects of criminal acts. Observers maintained that those with a weak aptitude ran a greater risk in later life of coming into conflict with the law and committing crimes. The prophylactic effect of separate placement at school would be used to combat the problems thus foreseen. The results of the investigation showed that if the weaker pupils were placed in a remedial class, the risk of criminality was no higher than among those with normal intelligence.<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>562</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2007), Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950 [The right pupil in the right class: School, aptitude and organisation 1910–1950]; Axelsson, Thom (2012), Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet [Tattare and aptitude: Manne Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 1.

<sup>563</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2007), Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950 [The right pupil in the right class: School, aptitude and organisation 1910–1950]; Judit Areschoug (2000), Det sinnesslöa skolbarnet: undervisning, tvång och medborgarskap 1925–1954 [The mentally deficient schoolchild: teaching, coercion and citizenship 1925–1954].

<sup>564</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2012), Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet [Tattare and aptitude: Manne

Aptitude came to be linked to gender and social background, but also to ethnicity. One key figure who shaped public opinion was a head teacher working at a remedial school in Gothenburg. He also edited the journal *Hjälpskolan* [Remedial School] and provided expert assistance to several inquiries.<sup>565</sup> This head teacher conducted several studies concerning “tattare” and their aptitude. He studied the matter in two ways. Partly by investigating and tracing three families far back in time. Partly by sending out questionnaires to over 80 people who were folk school teachers, staff at reform schools and workhouses, and also to parish civil registration offices.<sup>566</sup> The head teacher had the following arguments to underline the significance of his research:

“Criminality and lack of the ability to support oneself, inability to bring up children, alcoholism, immorality, irresponsibility, etc. are, to a not insignificant degree, a natural result of intellectual inferiority. An investigation of the intellectual state of tattare may thus be of practical significance in the battle against the tattare scourge, besides the

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Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 6. Remedial schools were one of the first forms of streaming used in the folk school system. This type of school was often set up on the initiative of an individual and was first developed in the mid-1850s. Over the course of the 20th century an increasing range of special classes were developed and the number of pupils attending these types of school increased from 0.4 per cent in 1921 to 4.3 per cent in 1959. The number of pupils in remedial classes increased in the same way, from 0.2 per cent in 1906 to 2.6 per cent in 1942. Up until the 1940s, it was up to the school district to set up remedial schools and draw up the curricula and syllabi themselves. From 1921, these had to be approved by the National Board of Education. In the 1930s, Committees were appointed to centralise the activities of remedial schools, but it was only in 1943 that a standardised lesson plan for remedial classes was put in place. Cf. Judit Areschoug (2000), *Det sinnesslöa skolbarnet: undervisning, tvång och medborgarskap 1925–1954* [The mentally deficient schoolchild: teaching, coercion and citizenship 1925–1954], s. 71; Ulla-Britt Bladini, *Från hjälpskolelärare till förändringsagent: svensk speciallärarutbildning 1921–1981 relaterad till speciallärarundervisningens utveckling och förändring i speciallärarens yrkesuppgifter* [From remedial school teacher to agent of change: Swedish remedial teacher training 1921–1981 related to the development of remedial teacher training and changes in the remedial teacher's role], Gothenburg, 1990, pp. 11–12; Cf. Viktor Fredriksson (Ed.), *Den svenska folkskolans historia* [History of Swedish elementary schooling], Part V (1950), pp. 110–114; SOU 1943:11 pp. 49–57.

<sup>565</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2007), *Rätt elev i rätt klass: Skola, begåvning och styrning 1910–1950* [The right pupil in the right class: School, aptitude and organisation 1910–1950], pages 153–167; Norma Montesino Parra (2002) *Zigenarfrågan: intervention och romantik* [The gypsy question: Intervention and romance].

<sup>566</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2012), *Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet* [Tattare and aptitude: Manne Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 16.

psychological research results that a similar investigation independent of this could provide.”<sup>567</sup>

In addition, the head teacher argued that, having conducted intelligence tests on a small scale, it was possible to conclude that mental retardation was not uncommon within this group. The head teacher established a form of personal register that, in his opinion, provided a good picture of different families' economic and moral standards.

The responses he received contained not only information about pupils and their schooling, but also assessments of the parents' housing conditions and employment and whether they received any financial support. Everything was recorded in files. These also noted IQ. Where IQ information had not been reported, the head teacher himself added a note based on an estimate of the reported social circumstances.<sup>568</sup>

Based on his investigations, the head teacher published several notable articles in which he argued that about 30 per cent of Traveller children were in remedial classes and thus were below average in terms of aptitude.<sup>569</sup> The conclusion drawn from this was that “mental retardation among [tattare] is roughly 10 times greater than normal”.<sup>570</sup> Of the children who attended remedial class, 75 of 99 had undergone intelligence tests. The head teacher declared that his investigations were not about an antisocial selection but rather a selection that was representative of the group he investigated.<sup>571</sup>

In the 1940s, an exchange of views took place concerning Travellers and their chances of integrating themselves into society.

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<sup>567</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2012), *Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet* [Tattare and aptitude: Manne Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 10.

<sup>568</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2012), *Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet* [Tattare and aptitude: Manne Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 16.

<sup>569</sup> Manne Ohlander (1943b), “Zigenarna, tattarna och hjälpskolan” [Gypsies, tattare and remedial school] in *Hjälpskolan* [Remedial school].

<sup>570</sup> Manne Ohlander (1943a), “Begåvningsförhållandena hos tattare: En genealogisk och sociologisk studie” [The intellectual state of tattare: A genealogical and sociological study] in *Tidskrift för psykologi och pedagogik* [The journal of psychology and education], no. 3, page 81.

<sup>571</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2012), *Tattarna och begåvning: Manne Ohlanders intelligensundersökningar av tattare under 1930-talet* [Tattare and aptitude: Manne Ohlander's intelligence testing of tattare in the 1930s]. Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 12.

The leading actors were public officials and academics representing the disciplines of ethnology, linguistics, social medicine and racial biology. The officials included representatives of the National Board of Health and Welfare, a trustee in Jönköping and the head teacher in Gothenburg. This exchange of views highlighted the belief that educational measures aimed at children were preferable to coercive measures targeting adults. It was argued that through the children it would be possible to change ways of life and behavioural patterns in the long term. Although these leading actors were at odds on a number of important points, they agreed that retraining and teaching under special control could be expected to have a certain positive effect. This opinion was also consistent with the results of the National Board of Health and Welfare's inventory of Roma in 1943 and 1944. The inventory had not presented any specific guidance on how it was possible to separate Travellers from other groups. Consequently, the very foundation of all separative measures against the group had no clear basis.

However, the National Board of Health and Welfare continued to regard Roma as a special group, but re-evaluated its previous position to a certain extent:

“It is clear that the sections of the population in question [tattare and gypsies], in their natural disposition and way of thinking, regard us as foreigners, as we, without real knowledge of how they think, feel and react, regard them as peculiar and alien. In many respects, they appear to lack of and even have a certain contempt for our concept of right and wrong. On the other hand, we have little knowledge of their moral code and barely rate it at all in those respects in which their special concept of justice is perhaps very strong, e.g. regarding bonds of friendship”.<sup>572</sup>

However, this attitude ran in parallel with the position that the social problems ascribed to Roma should be tackled by means of general socio-political measures.

School and home were considered the most important places in which unwanted behaviour could be prevented. The school system and social welfare system also had useful tools for discerning which

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<sup>572</sup> Statement from the National Board of Health and Welfare to the National Labour Market Commission, 29/5/1945, National Board of Health and Welfare, 5th Bureau, HV:6, National Archives.

groups might be considered for special measures. Poor relief and social welfare services had their own methods of identifying those potentially in need of help. Intelligence tests and evaluations of school attendance and performance were intended to serve as guidance for special measures in schools. These methods of identifying a clientele believed to be in need of special measures were also intended to enrol Roma. According to the National Board of Health and Welfare, many Roma were already found in remedial classes.

“The National Board of Health and Welfare also wants to direct attention to the fact that children from tattare families are remarkably often found in remedial classes, where this type of school has been established. Provided one dares to hope that a solution will be found to the important issue of general access to remedial teaching, this would certainly have particular significance for the children of tattare, on condition that action is also taken to guarantee that these children actually attend the teaching.”<sup>573</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s, remedial classes were seen not only as a concern for the education system but also for preventative efforts to make social policy effective.<sup>574</sup> Investigations were said to have shown that criminals had lower aptitude as they were more prevalent in remedial classes than the rest of the population. Remedial classes could act as a preventative institution combating undesirable behaviour, designated as antisocial behaviour, vagabondism and unwillingness to work. In a proposal concerning remedial classes, the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that:

“current aspirations in the field of social welfare also aim as far possible to prevent the inability to work and antisocial behaviour and the resultant growth in the need for various forms of intervention by social welfare bodies. The School Inquiry's current proposals involve measures in line with these aspirations and thus are suitable for

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<sup>573</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning an investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

<sup>574</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning the investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs on 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

shifting the social welfare emphasis from welfare and support that simply treat the symptoms to preventative action.”<sup>575</sup>

Although pupils in remedial classes were regarded as educable, they could not be compared with children of “normal intelligence” in terms of aptitude. These pupils were separated from the normal classes, usually because of poor performance in their school work.<sup>576</sup> Adequate remedial class teaching was deemed to require analysis of the children's realm of experience and some form of connection with it. The educational instruction often consisted of exercises that trained the children's elementary mental abilities and when they were presented with subject matter and work assignments. To a great extent, the school's assignments were linked to what was expected to be the pupils' future occupation: uncomplicated manual labour and needlework. Where teaching was concerned, the recommended subjects were largely handicrafts, needlework, gardening and training in domestic science. Local history was a key subject of a more theoretical nature in which the pupils were supposed to establish a familiarity with their local community.<sup>577</sup>

The survey conducted by the head teacher indicated that many of the children concerned had left school in accordance with something called Section 48. The material left behind by the head teacher also contains information pointing to this fact. The head teacher noted the following about one family in which all the children apart from number 13 had left school in accordance with Section 48 of the Folk School Regulations:

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<sup>575</sup> Opinion from the National Board of Health and Welfare on a report concerning an investigation of the tattare problem to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 16/6/1942, National Board of Health and Welfare, Social Welfare Bureau, B1a:5, National Archives.

<sup>576</sup> Nordström, Stig (1968), *Hjälpskolan och särskolan i Sverige t.o.m. 1921: Utveckling i relation till differentieringsproblemet* [Remedial schools and special schools in Sweden up until 1921: Development in relation to the problem of differentiation], p. 402.

<sup>577</sup> SOU 1936:31, *Betänkande med utredning och förslag angående åtgärder för särskild undervisning och utbildning av psykiskt efterblivna i barn- och ungdomsåren* [Official report with investigation and proposals regarding measures for special teaching and education for mentally retarded children and young people], s. 9; Bladini, Ulla-Britt (1990), *Från hjälpskolelärare till förändringsagent: svensk speciallärutbildning 1921–1981 relaterad till speciallärarundervisningens utveckling och förändringar i speciallärarens yrkesuppgifter* [From remedial school teacher to agent of change: Swedish remedial teacher training 1921–1981 related to the development of remedial teacher training and changes in the remedial teacher's role], p. 12.



“[All] have the tattare appearance, somewhat gypsy-like. Most markedly the husband and wife ... Tall and dark, somewhat colourful clothing. The children are good-natured and easy to handle in school, but are very unintelligent, however not retarded in any real sense. Orderly school attendance, but deficient hygiene.”<sup>578</sup>

Another family was described by the head teacher in similar terms:

“The husband is apathetic, lazy and unreliable (...) Tall, slender, brown-hued, handsome tattare”.<sup>579</sup>

The woman of the family was said to be:

“Vulgar, mendacious, untrustworthy, but good-natured. Fat, small and ugly.”<sup>580</sup>

The family's children were described as:

“Good-natured and listless, unintelligent, but easy to manage in school. Proficient at singing and drawing. Not a pronounced tattare-like appearance, but completely noticeable. The family ... is on the whole antisocial.”<sup>581</sup>

An official report of the Youth Welfare Committee of 1948 contained the information that between 5 and 6 per cent of the children attending remedial classes lived in towns and cities. In the suburbs, the percentage was consistently somewhat higher, as it was in “tattare districts”.<sup>582</sup>

Pupils who were not considered to meet the set knowledge requirements of school could, according to the Folk School Regulations from 1921 (SFS 1921:604), be given permission to leave school. Pupils who left school in accordance with Section 47 of the Regulations had completed the school's range of courses, but were not required to undertake any specific leavers' examination.

<sup>578</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 20.

<sup>579</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 20.

<sup>580</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 20.

<sup>581</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 20.

<sup>582</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 23.

This rule meant that they were able to go to school for one more year.

Pupils who were allowed to leave school early in accordance with Section 48 were considered not to have completed folk school. It was often pupils who had gone to school for half the time or lacked the necessary comprehension who were allowed to leave school in accordance with Section 48 of the Folk School Regulations. Poverty was also a reason to leave school in the years 1842–1936.<sup>583</sup>

Pupils who had finished folk school without complete grades and in accordance with Section 48 had more limited employment opportunities. State enterprises such as the Swedish State Railways and the Post Office, for example, required employees to have left school in accordance with Section 47 as a minimum. Pupils who had left school in accordance with Section 48, which in general were those children who had attended a remedial class, were not considered at all and were thus excluded from employment. In the 1950s, Swedish State Railways re-assessed their former position and, bearing in mind recruitment problems, announced in 1952 that in certain cases it could employ pupils who had left in accordance with Section 48. The Inquiry with Proposals for the Abolition of the Vagrancy Act (SOU 1949:4) maintained that adult vagrants had suffered as children from significant problems in school. According to the Inquiry, both male and female vagrants had been given detention and places in separate classes or had been given a leaving certificate in accordance with Section 48. In 1955, the Section 48 certificate was abolished from the leaving certificate.<sup>584</sup>

One aim of the remedial classes was to raise children to become competent members of society. In order to help these children, even after they had finished school, a new profession of school counselor was proposed, based on a Dutch model. The role of the school counselor would be to guide remedial class pupils into a workplace. The school counselor would also keep in contact with

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<sup>583</sup> SFS 1921:604, SFS 1936:305, Section 49 stipulated that pupils would not have to refrain from going to school on account of poverty; the Folk School Regulations 1958:399 abolished the previous Regulations 1921:604.

<sup>584</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 21.

the pupils and their employers after they had found work. In addition, a card index of all pupils would be set up. This enabled the school counselor to exercise control and control and to ensure that the relevant individuals had a suitable occupation.<sup>585</sup>

### 6.7.1 Examples of judgements that have affected conditions for Roma children

The following section is guided by Thom Axelsson's study and contains examples of how pupils could be streamed in Gothenburg and Malmö in the mid-20th century. Axelsson argues that there is nothing to indicate that the streaming of pupils based on notions of hereditary conditions and negative perceptions about Roma as a group was unique to these cities; rather this took place in the majority of schools in the country.<sup>586</sup> Such streaming must also be viewed against a background in which various forms of group testing seen as an effective instrument for establishing variations in aptitude in a class, were gaining influence. Several investigations took place that were said to show a connection between children from different social strata and their level of aptitude. Children from higher socio-economic strata were generally regarded as being more intelligent than children from lower socio-economic strata.<sup>587</sup>

In Gothenburg, pupils registered for the remedial class by their regular teacher were then tested by the head of the remedial class. For many years in the mid-20th century, the remedial class heads kept a specific register of people who were "tattare" in Gothenburg. As has already been noted, registers were drawn up in conjunction with the National Board of Health and Welfare's inventory; subsequent praxis can in many respects be regarded as a continuation of this method.

Archives from the Gothenburg School Board contain volumes of registrations for remedial class marked "The T-investigation" As

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<sup>585</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 26.

<sup>586</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 36.

<sup>587</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 35.

time went by, the remedial class heads would supplement these records with information about genealogical generation, siblings and who was married to whom, where they lived and where they had lived. It was not uncommon for this documentation to be based on hearsay and for information on these persons to be acquired from neighbours, since “says the neighbour's wife” is also given as a source.<sup>588</sup>

When pupils were to change school and start a remedial class, the school filled in a form containing information about their name, date of birth, guardian's occupation, address, etc. The school also entered information about whether the pupil's parents received poor relief and whether they received free books, free dental care and free meals. The pupil's appearance was also noted on the form:

“T ... is not at all like the family he belongs to! He has light hair, blue eyes and light skin.”<sup>589</sup>

“is handsome like the tattare family. Dark eyes, brown hair.”<sup>590</sup>

One of the files reveals how a teacher noted and evaluated a boy and his relatives as “tattare”. The teacher wrote that since:

“...the lad didn't want to go to school, various tattare accompanied him here, threatening and bawling at him!! And the boy screamed even more and wanted to run away to freedom”.<sup>591</sup>

The boy can be followed in his file over several years. The descriptions are negative and there is information to the effect that he could come to school “untidy” and that he threatened other pupils. The boy, who was in remedial class, finished school in accordance with Section 48.<sup>592</sup>

Another file concerning a pupil who finished school in accordance with Section 48 also describes the pupil's vulnerability.

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<sup>588</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, pages 28–29.

<sup>589</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 29.

<sup>590</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 29.

<sup>591</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 29.

<sup>592</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970 [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 29.

A boy was registered to the remedial class, the given reason being that his IQ was regarded as too low. A school counselor who followed the boy's schooling also stated that he came from an inferior home and was exposed to "substantial neglect". After visiting the home, the welfare officer reported that it contained dirty clothes, rags and dishes everywhere, in both the room and the kitchen. He concluded:

"Acc. to information the fam. is said to be of tattare stock and doesn't have a penny to its name."<sup>593</sup>

The school counselor's report led to the home receiving a warning and being placed under supervision by the officer.<sup>594</sup>

In Gothenburg, a special education operation for other Roma groups was also conducted in the 1940s. According to the head teacher referred to above, about 20 children were affected between 1942 and 1955 and they also had to undergo intelligence testing.<sup>595</sup>

There were various classes in the schools, with the pupil being sent to the most appropriate one following an aptitude test. The most common classes were normal class and remedial class. In larger towns, pupils were streamed into B, extra or weak class. The term B class was used in Malmö; this was for pupils who were presumed to have an IQ between 80 and 90.<sup>596</sup> The following describes the fortunes of a teenage girl who went to a school in Malmö in the themed-1950s and had to leave in accordance with Section 48.

The girl had to undergo several investigations at both the children's hospital and the psychiatric clinics, which sought to determine whether it was a good idea for her to continue going to school. The extensive investigations began because her teacher wrote a report to the effect that the girl was unable to keep up with the teaching. The girl attended the B class. According to the teacher, the girl was shy and quiet in lessons, as well as being well

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<sup>593</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 30.

<sup>594</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, pages 30–31.

<sup>595</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 43.

<sup>596</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 27.

behaved and obedient. She also got on well with her schoolmates. In addition, she was good at drawing, crafts and gymnastics, but was weak in the other subjects. Accordingly, the teacher wondered whether the girl should continue in the B class, be moved to the remedial class or discharged from school. One of the doctors who investigated the girl concluded that she had extensive adaptation difficulties and also found that she had a low IQ on the basis of a test. The doctor noted that the girl's schooling had been characterised by long periods of absence.

Another doctor argued that the girl's lack of aptitude and family circumstances indicated that it was pointless to attempt to get the girl to go to school. In addition, this doctor made notes about the girl's parents' aptitude based on obscure grounds. They were said to be moronic. The doctor recommended that the girl be taken into care.

A statement from the psychiatric clinic contains the perception that the girl's hereditary conditions affected her aptitude. According to this statement, there was severe mental retardation in the family, which the clinic suggested could be confirmed using earlier tests of the girl's father and mother.<sup>597</sup> Moreover, the following circumstances were identified as an encumbrance to the girl's aptitude.

“Both the mother and the father are of tattare stock and the social situation is extremely lamentable. The family has led an extremely itinerant existence and has not stayed long in the same place. The patient has thus already been to 8 different schools.”<sup>598</sup>

The statement also indicated that her home conditions were the worst imaginable.

“[T]ypical tattare environment with poor social adjustment.”<sup>599</sup>

It was said that relocation to another environment could have a positive effect on the girl. At the same time, doubt was expressed as to whether she could be adapted to another environment at all,

<sup>597</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 32.

<sup>598</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 32.

<sup>599</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 33.

as the parents could affect the girl negatively. An advisory bureau that was involved in one of the investigations thought along the same lines. If the girl was taken into care and got a place with another family, her social development would be of a different kind.<sup>600</sup>

In an overall assessment, the school principal decided that the investigations showed there was a connection between the girl's aptitude and her family circumstances, which made it pointless for her to go to school. In light of this, the folk school inspector in Malmö decided that the girl had to leave school in accordance with Section 48.<sup>601</sup>

## 6.8 Separate teaching in Stockholm

In parallel with Roma children being placed in remedial classes on somewhat obscure grounds, the City of Stockholm authorities organised teaching for some Roma children. Throughout the 1950s, the children were given breakfast in school, followed by an hour's teaching with individual instruction every day.<sup>602</sup> An investigation conducted in Stockholm at the end of the 1950s also shows how teaching was deliberately provided within the folk school system in separate classes and with few teaching hours, instead of being provided in the compulsory school system. The investigation also reveals that social welfare authorities and teachers in Stockholm collaborated in the design and implementation of the teaching.<sup>603</sup> It observes that a transition to normal classes was not possible for children who were in the twelve to thirteen age group and who had a poor educational background. Nor could these children go into the same class as eight- or nine-year-olds, for psychological reasons. The much older children

<sup>600</sup> Quotation from Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1945–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 33.

<sup>601</sup> Axelsson, Thom (2013), *Tattare, zigenare och skolan 1945–1970* [Tattare, gypsies and the school system 1940–1970], Ref. no. A2012/1804/DISK, page 33.

<sup>602</sup> A statement regarding Dagens Nyheter's article on 18/12/1957 by a civil servant from City of Stockholm on 19/12/1957, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Volume 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>603</sup> *Utredning rörande zigenarna i Stockholm och deras speciella problem* [Inquiry concerning gypsies in Stockholm and their specific problems] (1957), pp. 37–39, Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation, Volume 2, National Archives.

would easily end up as outsiders in the class and this would have a negative impact on their attitude to school.<sup>604</sup>

In Stockholm, the social welfare authorities were concerned by the fact that so few Roma children went to school. One explanation given was that the folk schools had not shown any interest in inviting Roma children living in their school district and nor did schools contact parents to find out why their children were not coming to school.<sup>605</sup>

Another report concluded that the majority of goals that had been set with regard to Roma children's access to school "had remained on the drawing board".<sup>606</sup> At the end of the 1950s, one Roma child received individual teaching in a rented flat in a residential area of Stockholm. The Schools Directorate in Stockholm intended to employ a teacher for Roma children. However, it was noted that:

"this special school for gypsy children is not an ideal solution in the long term. Clearly these children should not miss out on the opportunity to go to normal schools as contact with other children in association with normal school conditions is extremely valuable for their adjustment to society."<sup>607</sup>

Nevertheless, the authorities in Stockholm considered a special school for Roma children to be of value in a transition period. However, special schools provided a more stable environment and became permanent when the Stockholm Schools Directorate decided to establish a special class for around ten Roma children in 1960.<sup>608</sup>

At the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s, some Roma families moved to Stockholm (as well as to other cities such as Malmö and Gothenburg). At the same time, many Roma moved into flats. This change coincided with a new school policy. The

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<sup>604</sup> Utredning rörande zigenarna i Stockholm och deras speciella problem [Inquiry concerning gypsies in Stockholm and their specific problems] (1957), pp. 37–39, Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation, Volume 2, National Archives

<sup>605</sup> A statement regarding Dagens Nyheter's article on 18/12/1957 by a civil servant from City of Stockholm on 19/12/1957, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>606</sup> Report to the Swedish Social Welfare Association on 18/12/1959, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>607</sup> Report to the Swedish Social Welfare Association on 18/12/1959, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>608</sup> From the minutes of Stockholm Schools Directorate's meeting on 18/2/1960, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.



Gypsy Inquiry's (SOU 1956:43) proposal for Roma children to be placed in the folk school system was approved by the Government.<sup>609</sup> Thanks to this decision, municipalities could apply for state grants to teach Roma children in normal schools, at the same time as the municipalities' obligations increased. For example, Lilla Edet applied in 1960 for a state grant for 10 hours per week of separate teaching for six Roma children. The children first received teaching in Lilla Edet in the autumn term of 1958 and regularly went to school during that term and the following spring term. The children were taught in separate groups with instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic and followed class teaching in other subjects. The school in Lilla Edet received grants from the state for separate teaching in Swedish and arithmetic. Taken together, this enabled Roma children to gain access to education in normal classes.<sup>610</sup>

A summary of Roma children's school situation in Stockholm in 1965 – that is, close to 10 years after the Gypsy Inquiry's official report – painted a different picture. Barely half the children attended normal classes. More than half the children attended school preparatory classes, remedial classes, remedial reading classes, or O classes. The proportion attending remedial classes was close to 30 per cent. In addition, many of the pupils in normal classes did not attend the class that corresponded to their age.<sup>611</sup> The authorities declared themselves unable to conduct any assessment of the Roma pupils' chances of profiting from the teaching. There was instead renewed discussion about the possibility of establishing a special school for Roma children during a transition period, but the parties concerned were forced to acknowledge “that too little was known about fitting gypsy children into normal classes and their chances of assimilating the knowledge”.<sup>612</sup>

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<sup>609</sup> Government Bill (Budget Bill) App. 7 no. 81. 1958.

<sup>610</sup> Ministry of Education and Ecclesiastical Affairs' Registry, June nos. 16 and 17, 1960, National Archives.

<sup>611</sup> Memorandum regarding the rate of gypsy children's absence from school in the autumn term of 1964, 8/2/1965, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>612</sup> Memorandum regarding the rate of gypsy children's absence from school in the autumn term of 1964, 8/2/1965, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

## 6.9 Working groups and inquiries – the same issues in the period 1960–1990

The authorities in Stockholm found that they lacked knowledge and insight as to the factors affecting Roma children's integration into normal school classes. Consequently, they began working together with the Education Department at Stockholm University. Under the leadership of a professor at the Education Department, an extensive programme of research-based measures was instituted to educate and “socially adapt” Roma. These reform activities targeted both adults and children.

One insight the city gained was that living in a flat did not automatically lead to a high level of school attendance. Roma children failed to attend normal classes. A report presented in 1965 points out that average absence among Roma pupils was 37.5 days in the autumn term of 1964, equivalent to 43 per cent of the term (15 per cent was considered normal).<sup>613</sup>

### 6.9.1 Research and administration in cooperation

Researchers at the Education Department of Stockholm University were contacted and began an extensive research project in 1965 in cooperation with gypsy advisors from the City of Stockholm. The aim was to improve the attendance of Roma in schools and gradually integrate the pupils into normal teaching. The project's objective of ensuring that Roma had educational opportunities was set out in the planning stages of the research project:

“The work planned aims ultimately to provide school-age gypsy children with the opportunity to enjoy teaching within the Swedish school system that is considered to be appropriate to each child's capacity and within the scope of what the circumstances allow.”<sup>614</sup>

Each individual pupil's ability to assimilate teaching was to be assessed and an individually adapted action plan would then be

<sup>613</sup> Memorandum regarding the rate of gypsy children's absence from school in the autumn term of 1964, 8/2/1965, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>614</sup> Memorandum Proposal for a plan for an investigation regarding gypsy children's schooling in Stockholm, p. 3, 22/1/1965, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

produced in order to deal with any learning difficulties. The assessment included taking into account the pupil's social situation. For this reason, the measures taken also aimed to change the pupil's living conditions outside school. The research programme was expected to require extensive information about the pupils and their families, and included supporting the upbringing of Roma children. The children's capacity and the "situational circumstances" would determine whether they were placed in the compulsory school system or in other forms of teaching through placement in a special school.

The research project in Stockholm involved extensive information gathering and underwent three phases: the data-gathering phase, the treatment phase and the "promoting parenthood" phase.

#### 6.9.1.1 The data-gathering phase

The project's first phase, data gathering, involved a social investigation into all Roma families with school-age children in Stockholm. This led to the selection of a "treatment group", encompassing 26 school-age children, and a control group (the "untreated group"), made up of 42 school-age children. The first phase consisted of a "prediction of the initial chances of every child in the data being able to utilise the school's teaching".<sup>615</sup> In simple terms, this prediction, which was based on the social investigation and on the gypsy advisor's personal knowledge of the families, was a forecast of each pupil's potential to succeed in school (or conversely, the risk of failure). The researchers had agreed on 39 quantifiable variables that were hypothesised to represent the most important inhibitory or stimulatory factors in the situation of each individual child. The results were then combined and evaluated to form the prediction. The investigation examined issues such as conscientiousness, condition of the home, attitude to working life and education, and family members' personality and strength of purpose, on a scale of one to seven. The relationships between

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<sup>615</sup> Memorandum: an investigation concerning opportunities to facilitate school-age gypsy children's school attendance in Stockholm, p. 1, informal report to Stockholm Schools Directorate 14/4/1966, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

parents and children were also assessed on the same scale, as was the relationship between the husband and wife. The research team also assessed the child's status in the eyes of the parents and within the Roma group, as well as the parents' reported concerns about the children when outside the home (the latter variable was monitored by evaluating the extent of "objective realism" in their concern).<sup>616</sup> The data-gathering phase also included diagnostic investigations and various types of intelligence tests performed on Roma school pupils.<sup>617</sup>

### 6.9.1.2 The treatment phase

The second phase of the project was called the treatment phase. Material and psychological measures were targeted at the families. These measures were structured according to the findings of the data-gathering phase as interpreted by the social investigation – an interpretation that Roma did not have the opportunity to either influence or consent to themselves.<sup>618</sup> The objective of the "treatment phase" was to "promote gypsy parents' ability to take responsibility for their children's school attendance themselves".<sup>619</sup>

Initially, these measures appeared to have an effect. Attendance increased markedly in the autumn term of 1966. However, for various reasons, attendance rates subsequently declined dramatically, which necessitated a reformulation of the research project's objective. A strong contributory factor to this was also the fact that increased school attendance was not now thought to involve any guarantees that the children would take in the teaching. In addition, it was noted that being together with other classmates

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<sup>616</sup> Assessment of gypsy families with schoolchildren prediction of school attendance, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives

<sup>617</sup> Assessment form for gypsy children, Stockholm Schools Directorate, Educational psychological investigation, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives; Memorandum: an investigation concerning opportunities to facilitate school-age gypsy children's school attendance in Stockholm, p. 1 informal report to Stockholm Schools Directorate 14/4/1966, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>618</sup> 618 Memorandum: an investigation concerning opportunities to facilitate school-age gypsy children's school attendance in Stockholm, p. 1, informal report to Stockholm Schools Directorate 14/4/1966, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>619</sup> "Memorandum "The Gypsy Inquiry" – preliminary and concise summary of the research project's development up until the autumn term of 1966", p. 2, 25/1/1967, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

was not always positive from the perspective of Roma children. When a new assessment of the project's progress was made, the researchers levelled criticism at the school authorities in Stockholm. One perception put forward by the Education Department was that many Roma children were incorrectly placed in various forms of separate teaching, which the research team had no opportunity to influence:

“For example, a far higher proportion of the children were placed in remedial classes, school preparatory classes, remedial reading classes, etc. than could be considered justified by any intellectual deficiencies.

In cases where gypsy children were placed in normal classes, they often had to be put in a class that was several years (sometimes up to 5) below their own age as a result of their lack of prior schooling. What happened in all of these cases was that interaction with schoolmates was reduced or inadequate, sometimes humiliating and without exception unstimulating and not particularly enriching. Nor can it be assumed, given the composition of the class majority, that the teaching methods were particularly well adapted to the needs of gypsy children.”<sup>620</sup>

A reformulation of the project's aim led to “family treatment” being complemented with a mobile school clinic, the main purpose of which was to “change the environmental conditions in school by means of radical administrative transfers and a greater contribution from the school authorities” [underlining in the original].<sup>621</sup>

Clinic teaching meant the pupils being transferred on the basis of their age and aptitude; a syllabus was then drawn up based on the children's needs and involving adapted individual teaching at certain times throughout the week, with the rest of the time spent in normal classes. The clinic teachers kept detailed diaries of the children's progress and the teaching staff took part in seminar exercises and discussion groups to help improve their work. This

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<sup>620</sup> Memorandum “The Gypsy Inquiry” – preliminary and concise summary of the research project's development up until the autumn term of 1966, p. 4, 25/1/1967, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>621</sup> Memorandum “The Gypsy Inquiry” – preliminary and concise summary of the research project's development up until the autumn term of 1966, p. 4, 25/1/1967, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

change of course also rmarked an ambition to intensify efforts to alter the “complete situation” of Roma.<sup>622</sup>

### 6.9.1.3 Promoting parenthood

The third phase of the project was called “promoting parenthood”, the purpose of which was to change the attitude of Roma towards school so that attendance and the benefits of education would be the same for Roma children as for the rest of the population. This phase was based on the assumption that Roma as a group were historically incapable of adapting to their surroundings, adapting to the expectations of the community around them and preparing for the future. Roma were regarded as being trapped in a world-view that belonged to the past. The rapid outward change in their circumstances, in the form of different employment opportunities, active social policy and better housing, had not been accompanied by an “inward change”. This meant that Roma were not capable of benefiting from the new opportunities offered by society.<sup>623</sup>

The research team at Stockholm University, together with the social welfare authorities in Stockholm, came to the conclusion that the work should in future be focused on breaking what was regarded as a negative pattern of socialisation:

“These conserved [mode of life] patterns, now inadequate, represent one of the more impenetrable barriers to the rising generation's

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<sup>622</sup> More information in the chapter Access of Roma to work.

<sup>623</sup> Arne Trankell & Ingrid Trankell, Effekter av konserverande handlingsnormer och föreställningar om verkligheten i en minoritetsgrupps strävan till anpassning i en förändrad yttre miljö: förslag till samordnat aktionsprogram [Effects of preserved action norms and concepts on the reality of a minority group's efforts to adapt in an altered external environment: proposals for a coordinated action plan], report no. 4, pp. 44 ff; Gustavsson, Inga (1971), Studier i en minoritetsgrupps strävan att bevara sin kulturella autonomi [Studies in a minority group's efforts to preserve their cultural autonomy], pp. 12–16; Montesino Parra (2002), pp. 160–162; Memorandum “The Gypsy Inquiry” – preliminary and concise summary of the research project's development up until the autumn term of 1966, p. 7, 25/1/1967; Memorandum Completion of rehabilitation activities among gypsies, Bengt Andersson, Erik Ekman and Karl-Erik Granath, undated; Memorandum to public officials and concerned parties, 18/10/1968; Memorandum opinions and proposals for the forthcoming rehabilitation efforts involving the gypsy population in Stockholm, 11/6/1968, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

socialisation and growth into members of the society that awaits them as adults".<sup>624</sup>

One task of the research team was to draw attention the situation of children in preschool. Children's lives prior to school age were said to be characterised by limited contact with the world outside the immediate family. The games and pursuits they engaged in were regarded as not sufficiently constructive and of little use in developing the personality, and this was judged to contribute to difficulties in school in later life. Parenting groups led by psychologists were used to encourage Roma parents to meet what were understood to be their children's needs, and there were attempts to introduce appropriate toys, children's books and other materials to stimulate their children's development and rearing. Teachers from the school clinics were appointed by the child welfare board to monitor Roma families.<sup>625</sup>

### 6.9.2 New working groups and inquiries

When the research project was formally concluded at the end of the 1960s, a working group for Roma affairs was formed in Stockholm containing representatives from several public authorities. The working group took over the experience, working practices and analyses that the research had generated, due in part to the fact that individuals from the research team were active and deeply involved in issues affecting Roma, even after the project had formally ended. However, the issues they were dealing with were fundamentally the same into the next decade. Several investigations conducted at the beginning of the 1970s showed that Roma school attendance had improved temporarily for a few years in the mid-1960s, but had then decreased to about the same level as prior to the start of the research project.

Investigations at the beginning of the 1970s showed that a large proportion of Roma pupils were placed in remedial classes and

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<sup>624</sup> Memorandum "The Gypsy Inquiry" – preliminary and concise summary of the research project's development up until the autumn term of 1966, p. 7, 25/1/1967, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>625</sup> Memorandum "Completion of rehabilitation activities among gypsies", undated, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

school clinics.<sup>626</sup> This situation caused the Schools Directorate in Stockholm to set up a new working group to investigate the teaching situation for children and adults. The working group published its report in 1973 (Zigun 73). This proposed the establishment of a central working group that would regularly review current school problems involving Roma pupils. This working group was formed under the name ZEUS (zigeniska elevernas undervisningssituation [gypsy pupils' teaching situation]) in 1974, but shortly afterwards simply became a coordinating body for the various municipal school management areas in Stockholm.<sup>627</sup>

The analysis of the school situation for Roma pupils was largely coloured by perceptions that the Roma group had directly or indirectly caused the problems itself. This explanatory model was gradually supplemented by an insight that society had imposed demands without any regard whatsoever to the opinions, desires and values of the Roma population.<sup>628</sup>

The National Board of Education issued new instructions for Roma children's schooling in 1979.<sup>629</sup> These instructions sought both to emphasise and to harmonise with the home-language reform that had come into force a few years earlier and which also covered Roma pupils. Children had a right to both teaching in the language they used at home and remedial teaching in Swedish if they so desired. Parents had the right to decide which home language was appropriate. However, the instructions allowed for the use of various forms of separate Roma teaching groups to compensate for poor school attendance and skills compared with the majority population. The aim of separate teaching was to provide basic knowledge of Swedish and arithmetic and facilitate placement in normal classes. The National Board of Education also emphasised that Roma culture, its manners and customs, differed

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<sup>626</sup> Ds A 1975:8, pp. 132–146; Ingrid Iverstam, Tomas Johansson & Nils Wall, *Socialt arbete med zigenare: erfarenheter av sociala insatser bland zigenare*, rapport från sektionen för zigenarfrågor 10:2 [Social work with gypsies: experiences from social work initiatives among gypsies, report from the Section for Gypsy Issues 10:2], Stockholm, 1978, pp. 16–19.

<sup>627</sup> Response to a communication, case no. KEJ 58/83, 29/4/1983, Section for Gypsy Issues, Stockholm Social Welfare Services, Gypsy Section, F 5b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>628</sup> Ds A 1975:8, p. 146.

<sup>629</sup> SÖ-SF 1979:231 *Anvisningar för zigeniska barns skolgång* [Instructions for gypsy children's schooling].



in many ways from those of the majority population. It was assumed that this could lead to miss concerning the objectives the school was working towards. It noted that these miss could be aggravated as a result of the parents' lack of educational experience and the school staff's lack of knowledge about Roma culture. Consequently, the Board stated that it was important for school staff to inform parents about their right to participate in shaping various aspects of the school system and its activities.

These instructions proved difficult to adhere to. At a conference on Roma issues in 1979, the Nordic Gypsy Council pointed out that Roma pupils were being segregated by deliberately streaming them into classes in which the standard of teaching did not live up to the requirements society placed on schools in general. For example, school staff placed Roma children in Finnish language teaching groups, although they had little grasp of Finnish. The Gypsy Council also questioned why the children's cultural background was not used as a resource to help stimulate them in school. The Gypsy Council believed that adding cultural flavour to the educational content could both engage parents and motivate pupils.<sup>630</sup>

The home-language reform led to the National Board of Education starting a project to produce teaching aids in Romani at the end of the 1970s. When this was evaluated in 1981/82, only one such aid existed and this could only be used by two Roma groups. The evaluation demonstrated not only that there was an insufficient availability of home-language teaching aids, but also that there were few home-language teachers in Romani. The evaluation only succeeded in identifying six such teachers in the entire country. In addition, it was thought that their teaching expertise was potentially questionable.<sup>631</sup> In a survey conducted several years later by the National Board of Education, a renewed attempt was made to calculate how many Roma children received home-language teaching and the number of presumptive home-

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<sup>630</sup> Memorandum The Nordic Gypsy Council's opinion on gypsy children's teaching in Sweden, presented by Aleka Stobin at the cooperation conference on gypsy issues, 22–23/11/1979, Aleka Stobin's Archive 4 b, Vol. 1, National Archives.

<sup>631</sup> I vilken utsträckning undervisas zigenska barn på sitt hemspråk?: Aleka Stobin på uppdrag åt Skolöverstyrelsen [To what extent are gypsy children taught in their home language?: Aleka Stobin commissioned by the National Board of Education], 14/5/1982, pp. 2–3, Gypsy Section, F 5b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

language teachers. The survey confirmed that the proportion of home-language teaching led by unqualified home-language teachers was higher for Romani (about 90 percent of teaching time) than for other home languages. The lack of teaching aids was not regarded as acute as previously since two children's books in Romani were published in 1982, both being translations of well-known Swedish children's books, *Alfons Åberg* and *Emil i Lönneberga*.<sup>632</sup>

A memorandum written by the National Board of Education in 1988 was lacking neither in analysis of the causes behind the school situation of Roma nor in proposals for overall measures. With regard to the causes of the school situation, the memo dealt with, among other things, the deficient methods used by schools with a lack of adequate teaching aids, deficient training for teachers, deficient teaching premises and so forth. The proposed solutions, which were said to be based on many years' experience of surveying, investigation and discussion, therefore focused on home-language teaching, continuing professional development for teachers with Roma pupils, information materials about Roma and Roma culture for school staff and the country's pupils, and the development of Roma teaching aids, with Roma educators being involved in their production to guarantee that these fulfilled their intended function of creating identity. However, the measures actually proposed for the school year 1988/1989 appear not to correspond to the investigatory work performed. What the Board undertook to do during the school year was to organise a conference, a work seminar and a follow-up of the effects of a new method of calculating state grants.<sup>633</sup>

## 6.10 Concluding remarks

What many of the people interviewed have in common is that they feel they have been subjected to discrimination that has affected every aspect of their lives. The chronological review of the

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<sup>632</sup> Survey of home-language teachers in Romani, National Board of Education 1/8/1983 (no. 3049–82:1365), Gypsy Section, F 5b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>633</sup> Memorandum "Gypsy pupils in compulsory school", National Board of Education, 8/10/1988, Gypsy Section, F 5b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

perceptions and measures concerning Roma children's schooling may be said to confirm their experiences. The following gives an account of some characteristic features that have affected Roma children's access to education over the course of the 20th century.

Many of the nationwide investigations targeting Roma conducted at the beginning of the 20th century contained observations about children's upbringing and education. Many noted that children's education was neglected. Children's upbringing and education could be dealt with by separating children from their parents. The establishment of boarding schools for the education and rearing of Roma, where the children were separated from their parents and their culture, was proposed as a way to provide children with continuous schooling.

Many Roma children were excluded from school at the beginning of the 20th century. Roma children were not welcome. The National Board of Education gave a voluntary church organisation, the Swedish Gypsy Mission Foundation, the role of organising teaching for Roma children. Children received teaching from the Gypsy Mission in what was known as the mobile "gypsy school". This was implemented as an experiment and involved Roma children being taught separately. What also characterised this period was that Roma children attending school were subject to streaming. This was to be achieved by measuring the pupils' abilities and, as described above, children were separated from normal classes on the basis of negative perceptions about their affiliation.

The second half of the century was characterised by the idea of formally integrating Roma into comprehensive schooling. Roma gained formal access to compulsory education. However, many Roma children's chances of obtaining an equivalent education were affected by the fact that many of them were placed in classes that were outside normal class tuition.

The extensive research project that aimed to support the access of Roma to education often ended up dwelling on issues involving attendance and admission to education rather than equal opportunities to profit from an education. This sheds light on a thought pattern that may be said to distinguish matters concerning Roma children's access to education. Unequal access to education was affected by notions of the dissimilarity of Roma, and demands

for equivalence were made conditional upon demands for similarity. It was in the light of such notions that extensive measures were taken to “rehabilitate” Roma as a group and change the world-view of Roma families. It is striking how the evaluations, surveys, conferences and investigations of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s inform one another. One year's observations are followed up, researched and confirmed a year or two later without actually contributing to any change. The perception that Roma themselves have been an obstruction to an equivalent education is a common theme of 20th century measures relating to Roma education. It was considered impossible to solve school-related problems without taking steps to change Roma.

# 7 Access of Roma to work

## 7.1 Introduction

Over the course of the 20th century Sweden has experienced a range of social reforms. The labour market has changed considerably in terms of the working population's demographics, education and geography, which has had an impact on who works, how they work, where they work and what their work involves. Such changes have great significance, not just for the labour market, but also for social development in general. Not having access to working life means being excluded from consumption, security and choices. It also means being deprived of a context, participation in shaping society, the right to resources and the possibility of empowerment.

This chapter describes the norms and regulations that have affected the chances of Roma gaining access to work. The intention is not to provide an account of the number of Roma who have been inside or outside the labour market. Instead the intention is to shed light on the perceptions that have existed about Roma and the policy measures the public authorities have implemented against the background of what they believed they knew.

The chapter begins with a review of some of the regulations in the first half of the 20th century that affected opportunities for Roma to support themselves, and some examples are provided of how these were implemented. This is followed by a description of the measures proposed by the Gypsy Inquiry in the mid-1950s. Policy took on a new direction, and so the previous period's norms and regulations were replaced with measures focused on reform. This account describes initiatives involving adult education and vocational education in Stockholm, which in many respects came to dominate measures by the public authorities to get Roma into

the regular labour market. A review of the National Archives' database reveals that many of the measures characteristic of Stockholm were not unique, but were also implemented in other parts of the country.<sup>634</sup>

## 7.2 Legislation that affected opportunities for Roma to support themselves 1900–1960

The Vagrancy Act is one of the laws affecting opportunities for Roma to support themselves and it has a long history. It originated from a regulation of the lower strata of society in pre-industrial Sweden and stipulated an obligation to take employment.<sup>635</sup> Being unemployed<sup>636</sup> was a crime of omission. The unemployed were considered to have avoided work. The legislation did not take into consideration the circumstances of unemployment or whether the unemployed person had attempted to find work or had been unsuccessful. The unemployed risked being sentenced to serve at a fortress or carry out work arranged for by the community.

The Vagrancy Act of 1885 shows that idleness, bad behaviour and begging were thought to foster criminal tendencies, which disturbed public order. People who “tattare about” the country without lawful intentions and without the means to support themselves threatened the security of the general public. This meant that attention was focused on stationary vagrants whose character and appearance suggested the presence of criminal

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<sup>634</sup> Adult education for Roma and the National Board of Education's course “adaptation and training” was implemented at several vocational education centres, including in Malmö. The vocational education centre in Malmö's archive, E2, Volume 4; County Archives in Lund; The vocational education centre in Norrköping's archive, B3, Volume 32, County Archives in Vadstena; cf. Ministry Publication Ds A 1975:8, *Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder av Expertgruppen för vissa zigenarfrågor* [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], pages 55 ff.

<sup>635</sup> Nilsson, Roddy (2003), *Kontroll, makt och omsorg: sociala problem och socialpolitik i Sverige 1780–1940* [Control, power and care: social problems and social policy in Sweden 1780–1940], pages 125 f, 219 f.

<sup>636</sup> According to the terminology of the day, the word *försvarslös* [defenceless] was used in the now archaic sense of not enjoying the protection that employment provides against being treated as a vagrant. The term *arbetslös* [unemployed] did not exist before the advent of a labour market.

intent.<sup>637</sup> The perception that certain people were more or less predestined from birth to become vagrants was also expressed.<sup>638</sup>

The Act drew an indistinct boundary between those seeking work and those who were not regarded as looking for work in an honest way.<sup>639</sup> This problem was also touched on in the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief's official report on proposed changes to the Vagrancy Act of 1885. The report indicates that it was natural for people to travel outside their home town in order to find work in times of crisis. Such people should not be taken into custody as vagrants. The public authorities would use a comprehensive assessment to sift out "genuine" jobseekers from others. The assessment would take into account a person's general way of life, occupation, physical constitution, job opportunities, etc. There were no exceptions for people who made a living as small traders. If the public authorities found that an enterprise provided less profit than required to make a living, they could convict the person in question of vagrancy.<sup>640</sup> If one or more unknown, unemployed people were found in one place, they could be arrested under the Vagrancy Act. In general, regulations in towns and rural areas enjoined the public to report outsiders staying in the local community.<sup>641</sup> Suspicious persons could then be arrested and interrogated by the police. Those interrogated were expected to provide information about their place of residence and the place where they were registered for the census, and to account for their activities since leaving their parental home, which, as a rule, occurred just after their confirmation. If the police found the person to be guilty of vagrancy, they could be cautioned. If there

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<sup>637</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 43 f. A distinction was made between two types of vagrant: the type that "roams around from one town to the next" and those who, without being "vagabonds", "lead their lives in a way that endangers public safety, order or civilised behaviour", cf. specifically SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 48.

<sup>638</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 44.

<sup>639</sup> Jakobsson, Svante (1984) På kant med samhället: om "löst folks" tillvaro på 1880-talet [At odds with society: the life of "vagrant people" in the 1880s], pages 146–150; SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants].

<sup>640</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 82–83.

<sup>641</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 73.

was a suspicion that the person arrested had withheld information from the police, they could be detained. If the person in question had been cautioned in the past, they could be detained and sentenced to hard labour.<sup>642</sup>

The transcript of one interrogation provides an example of how the Vagrancy Act could be applied at the beginning of the century. A party of eight people arrived in Mariefred in July 1913. There were five adults and three children. The women were in their 20s, the first male was only 17, the second 22 and the third 29 years old. Most of them had left their parental home when they were around 15. The father of one of the women had died when she was eight years old and she had been boarded out to an folk school teacher in her home district. Everyone in the party had been to school and could read and write. All but one had been confirmed. For a number of years the men had been apprentice leadsmiths and coppersmiths and the women had worked as servants for short periods. The women were unmarried, but stated when questioned by the police in Mariefred that they were engaged to the men.

In the same interview, it was divulged that the party had a small sales enterprise through which they supported themselves. They sold clay pots and had a small amount of stock with them, and also traded in junk. In addition, they had tools and various accessories for tin-plating copper vessels, which they could use to tin-plate goods for the local population if the chance arose. The interrogation transcript refers to the brothers as being of “what is known as tattare stock”.<sup>643</sup> Just after their arrival in Mariefred, everyone in the party was arrested and questioned. Several people in Mariefred had complained about the party's “importunate, ill-mannered and inappropriate conduct on the days they had spent in the town”.<sup>644</sup> During the interrogation, it emerged that the women and the three young children had visited a preacher's home and asked him for food and clothing. The preacher had then gone to

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<sup>642</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 29 f.

<sup>643</sup> Quotation from the Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 18/7/1913 no. 26, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives (ULA). <sup>643</sup> Other information from the Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 21–24, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>644</sup> Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 24, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives.



the police. One of the men in the party had caused annoyance by shouting on the town's streets.<sup>645</sup> The charges were denied by those arrested.

However, the police transcript indicates that the eight people admitted that no one in the party was in fixed employment and that they had sought to earn their living by travelling around the countryside, where they would support themselves by trading, selling and offering simple services. The eight people also admitted that they did not have a permanent home, but had for some time been living in barns, cowsheds and outhouses. They also lacked the means to support themselves, despite having a small sales enterprise. The police in Mariefred concluded:

“It appears probable that the party, consisting of 8 people, cannot support themselves on the earnings gained from the sale of clay pots, given that the stock they carry is of a value not exceeding 30 kronor. Under such circumstances, it would be the area's population that would find itself compelled to support them.”<sup>646</sup>

The eldest brother was given three months' hard labour as he was found to have been punished for vagrancy in the past. The remainder of the party were cautioned for vagrancy and were forced to leave Mariefred Municipality.<sup>647</sup>

One interpretation of the Vagrancy Act is that the vagrant was “a remainder category ... made up of what was left when the worthy poor and unemployed had been allocated [a place] within the ever more generous social insurance system, when the prisons had taken charge of the criminals who had committed demonstrable crimes and when the facilities for alcoholics had locked up their clientele.”<sup>648</sup> It appears that vagrants were described in terms of what they were not. This was somewhat hard to

<sup>645</sup> Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 22, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>646</sup> Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 21, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>647</sup> Information about the legal consequences has been noted in the police transcript by the Royal Commanding Officer in pencil in the interrogation transcript, cf. the Police Superintendent in Mariefred's interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 21, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>648</sup> Edman, Johan (2008) “Lösdrivarlagen och den samhällsfarliga lättjan” [“The Vagrancy Act and the idleness that threatens society”] in Villkorandets politik: fattigdomens premisser och samhällets åtgärder – då och nu [The politics of conditions: Assumptions about poverty and society's endeavours – then and now], page 135.

determine, and did not necessarily have anything to do with what the person had done, rather what they had not done.

Given this, it is hardly surprising that proposals for reworking the act mentioned subgroups that were, in turn, difficult to define clearly. These were hobos, procuresses, “tattare” and “gypsies”. As has already been established, the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief devoted a great deal of space to “tattare” and “gypsies” in its proposals for a new vagrancy act. These proposals included a statistical investigation of the number of vagrants in 1905–1907. It noted that 108 “tattare”, 30 of whom were accompanied by young children, had been cautioned for vagrancy.<sup>649</sup> This was not a large proportion of vagrants in general; rather it constituted around one thousandth of the total number of people who had been cautioned for vagrancy. However, in relation to the size of the group “tattare or gypsies” this was no insignificant proportion as the census of 1910 had recorded 488 such people in the parish registers.<sup>650</sup>

Naturally, such data must be treated with the utmost caution. As has already been pointed out, these were categorisations made by public authorities, vicars and the police of what was considered to be a distinct ethnic group. These categorisations were rarely based on the perceptions and definitions of those being categorised themselves; instead they were based on the local community's traditions and prejudices. However, in this context it is interesting that a large proportion of those who had been categorised as “tattare or gypsies” in parish registers can also be found in police records under the same categorisation, having been interrogated in relation to vagrancy.

There is information to the effect that many Roma were detained and cautioned for vagrancy in the first decades of the 20th century. Here, the fact that these people had been categorised as “tattare” and “gypsies” was significant. For the police, who were obliged to provide evidence that the persons arrested were not supporting themselves honestly and were behaving in a manner

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<sup>649</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 285.

<sup>650</sup> Folkräkningen 1910:IV befolkningens fördelning efter hushåll, trosbekännelse, födelseort m.m. [Census 1910:IV the population distributed by household, religion, place of birth, etc.], page 32.

that disrupted public order and safety, the categorisation came to eliminate any doubt as to whether those concerned were leading a bad way of life, were immoral or were not attempting to support themselves honestly. Unfavourable assessments such as these were part of the very perceptions people had about Roma. Prejudices against Roma were used as evidence, which perhaps was not always needed to get a person cautioned for vagrancy but which became an aggravating circumstance for the person arrested. In other words, being identified as Roma made it easier for the police to take action. The following, based on an interrogation transcript, is another example of a course of action that affected Roma.

A woman and a man were travelling together with their children from Västerås to Örebro in order to buy goods for their funfair. When they arrived in Örebro on the afternoon of 11 October 1922 they were denied accommodation in the city. Consequently, they went to the outskirts of Örebro, where another party of Roma had been given permission to live by the landowner. The day after the couple's arrival, the police raided the camp. All present in the camp, 28 adults and 67 children, were arrested for vagrancy by the police and transported to Örebro for interrogation. Besides the 28 people in the large party, the couple were also arrested. The police cautioned all members of the large party staying outside Örebro for vagrancy. They were urged to leave the municipality as they lacked permanent housing and could not provide evidence that they had the means to support themselves.<sup>651</sup> However, it was a different situation with the couple. The husband pointed out that he had a not insignificant funfair that was currently in Västerås and that he had permission from the magistrate in Västerås to conduct his business there. He engaged a lawyer to contest the Örebro police authority's caution for vagrancy. He argued that he had been entered in the parish records in Västerås since 1909 and denied that he "wandered around from place to place". Instead he argued that he travelled to different towns with his business in accordance with

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<sup>651</sup> During the interrogation it came out that all of the Roma were Swedish citizens and were entered in the parish records in parishes in Sweden. None of them could read or write and none had been confirmed. The Police Superintendent in Örebro's vagrancy report of 12/10/1922, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

a plan.<sup>652</sup> The County Governor conducted an investigation into whether there was any truth to this claim.

The investigation demonstrated that the couple were listed in the parish register in Västerås as man and wife. The police in Västerås confirmed that the couple had been granted the magistrate's permission to arrange variety shows in tents on several occasions. They also pointed out that the Roma party had conducted themselves "satisfactorily".<sup>653</sup> The Magistrate in Lidköping, who had also granted permission for the couple's business, did not have any criticism of them, either.<sup>654</sup>

The police in Örebro were not satisfied with the results of the investigation. On the contrary, they resorted to various lines of argument in order to show that the couple were guilty of vagrancy. Firstly, they believed that the husband could not provide evidence that he owned the business in question. Secondly, they found itposterous that:

"roaming bands of gypsies should be safeguarded from being dealt with in accordance with the Vagrancy Act by means of their happening to supply the public, in a different place to that in which their behaviour occasions police intervention, with such a questionable racket as the funfair business is in reality."<sup>655</sup>

What the police authority in Örebro meant by this was that permission to do business in Västerås did not give them a reason to travel to Örebro, in particular as they were taken into custody by the police. In addition, there was a suspicion that the couple had not travelled to Örebro on business at all but rather intended to join the party that was already there. The police in Västerås stated that it was true that the party had "conducted themselves respectably" in the city, but the people of Västerås regarded Roma

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<sup>652</sup> Letter from Bessik Taikon to the King's Commander in Örebro County, 18/10/1922, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>653</sup> Police report from Västerås City to the Magistrate in Västerås, 13/11/1922, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>654</sup> Statement from the Police Superintendent in Örebro County to the King's Commander in Örebro County, 27/12/1922, p. 1, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>655</sup> Statement from the Police Superintendent in Örebro County to the King's Commander in Örebro County, 27/12/1922, page 4, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

in general as “a nuisance” when they visited.<sup>656</sup> The fact that the couple did not have a permanent home in Västerås was also used against them. Given these circumstances, the police in Örebro concluded that the couple had not had the means to support themselves, lacked a permanent home, could not support themselves honestly through work and led a way of life which was a threat to public order, safety and civilised behaviour.<sup>657</sup>

Similar attitudes have also been found in interrogation transcripts from the police superintendents in Askersund and Fjugesta in Örebro County. Dating from 1900 to 1937, in the same county, a total of 48 interrogation transcripts have been found in which the person arrested is described as Roma.

A transcript from August 1926 shows the circumstances the police considered important to present in a case concerning vagrancy. The transcript indicates that the person in question admitted he supported himself through market trading, that he had been drunk and that he had resisted arrest.<sup>658</sup> In addition, the police recorded the following circumstances:

“On market days and certain Thursdays a number of what are known as tattare gather here in the town. Some barter with horses and some bring diverse junk to sell. In general they barter dishonestly, partly by concealing chronic problems with the animals, partly by providing false information about the animals' ages and partly by using cunning, insistence and threats to influence simple-minded animal owners who they come into contact with at the marketplace or elsewhere. On the journey between marketplaces they neglect and mistreat the animals, who are fed in the countryside at the cost of others, while they extort food and accommodation themselves. They are not infrequently violent towards people or property and cause other nuisances. In general they abuse liquor and in their intoxicated state are a danger to public safety and order, to which the resulting incidents such as violence, thefts and other crimes bear clear witness. It is more unusual

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<sup>656</sup> Statement from the Police Superintendent in Örebro County to the King's Commander in Örebro County, 27/12/1922, page 3, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>657</sup> Statement from the Police Superintendent in Örebro County to the King's Commander in Örebro County, 27/12/1922, page 3, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1921–1925, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>658</sup> Interrogation transcripts regarding vagrancy by the Police Superintendent in Askersund, 26/8/1926, no. 13, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 7 1926–1930, ULA; Resolution, His Royal Highness' Commander in Örebro County, 10/9/1926, vagrancy d. 27, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 7 1926–1930, Uppsala County Archives.

that they devote themselves to ordered work and they do not respect the applicable laws or comply with the resulting admonitions of the police authority. Their progeny, which are worryingly increasing in number, are reared in the same spirit, the aim being to develop their inherited traits in the same direction.”<sup>659</sup>

This interrogation transcript shows that the Vagrancy Act and the actions of the police affected Roma’s chances of supporting themselves. Roma cautioned for vagrancy were shown to have had various means of income. The transcript shows that Roma supported themselves by working as farmhands, maids, in factories and in construction.<sup>660</sup> Some owned properties and one owned a sizeable agricultural estate.<sup>661</sup> The majority earned their living from handicrafts and selling, and several had been apprenticed to blacksmiths or sheet-metal workers.

### 7.3 Peddlery and other economic activity

The access of Roma to work at the beginning of the century should also be viewed in the context of Sweden’s long history of peddlery. Despite such selling practices having been basically prohibited for long periods, the rural population bought many of their wares from travelling salesmen. This prohibition was gradually phased out as part of an increasingly rapid liberalisation and reform of the guild system.<sup>662</sup>

When freedom of trade legislation was introduced in 1864, many of the barriers that had previously regulated peddlery were removed. This was based on the liberal economic ideas of the time

<sup>659</sup> Interrogation transcripts regarding vagrancy by the Police Superintendent in Askersund, 26/8/1926, no. 13, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 7 1926–1930, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>660</sup> The Police Superintendent in Mariestad’s interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 24, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives; The Police Superintendent in Mariestad’s interrogation transcript, 11/7/1913 no. 26, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives; The Police Superintendent in Mariestad’s interrogation transcript, 12/3/1927 no. 75, D XXIII, Uppsala County Archives; The Police Superintendent in Fjögesta’s interrogation transcript, 2–3/8/1923, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1926–1930, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>661</sup> The Police Superintendent in Fjögesta’s interrogation transcript, 2–3/8/1923, County Secretariat in Örebro County, XXIII, Volume 6 1926–1930, Uppsala County Archives.

<sup>662</sup> Ericsson, Tom (2008), “Mellan kapital och arbete” [Between capital and labour] in Scandia, pp. 255–256; G. Rosander (1980), *Gårdfarihandel i Norden* [Peddlery in the Nordic countries], Stockholm, pp. 38–40.

which meant that all were free to support themselves through trade. However, trade did not become completely free as certain requirements on those engaging in it were introduced at the same time. These were accompanied by an obligation to register with the county administrative board, which functioned as a regulator safeguarding the interests of taxation.

In the final decades of the 19th century several proposals to further limit peddlery were put forward and in 1887 the Riksdag approved stricter legislation that meant the special permit for peddlery had to include information and a description of the trader's appearance. There was also a requirement whereby the trader had to have a reputation for honesty and orderliness. This legislation resulted in the number of door-to-door traders decreasing in the final decades of the 19th century.<sup>663</sup>

Tom Ericsson contends that many groups with interests in wholesaling and retail conducted a campaign against peddlery as it was regarded as a threat to the financial interests of traditional trade. Those arguing against such selling used disparaging descriptions of door-to-door traders and xenophobic propaganda. Representatives of the retail industry said that door-to-door traders were usually not Swedish and that consequently it was mainly foreign interests that benefited. Traditional Swedish trade was portrayed as responsible and possessing a sense of duty, while the door-to-door trade attracted foreign “dealers” who sold their goods using fraudulent methods and who did not take responsibility for the national economy. At the beginning of the 1910s, the retail industry's trade organisations conducted a campaign against peddlery. It came to focus on the traders themselves, and the public were encouraged to report those who engaged in illegal peddlery. The trade organisation even gave a reward to the informant if the trader was convicted of illegal practice.<sup>664</sup> Ericsson states that the tone of the criticism levelled at door-to-door traders became harsher when many Jews and Roma

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<sup>663</sup> Statistisk översikt av det svenska näringslivets utveckling 1870–1915 med särskild hänsyn till industri, handel och sjöfart [Statistical overview of the development of Swedish trade and industry 1870–1915 with specific reference to industry, trade and shipping]. Statistiska meddelanden. Series A, Volume III:1, Stockholm, 1919, pp. 40–41.

<sup>664</sup> Ericsson, Tom (2008), “Mellan kapital och arbete” [“Between capital and labour”] in Scandia 2008, pages 257–260.

from Eastern Europe began to support themselves through peddlery. These arguments positioned the Swedish retail industry as a guarantor of the quality of its goods, while door-to-door traders were depicted as aliens who sold inferior goods.<sup>665</sup>

One result of the peddlery legislation introduced in the final decades of the 19th century was that those applying for permits increasingly became subject to scrutiny. Honesty and orderliness became the basic grounds on which they were assessed. The official report of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief stated that one effect of the permit application process was that many Roma did not receive permission to sell door-to-door.<sup>666</sup> At the same time, the police districts' responses to the Committee indicate that Roma had permits to sell door-to-door in several counties.<sup>667</sup> In other counties, Roma were stated as being involved in peddlery without the necessary permission.<sup>668</sup>

Roma came up against barriers when attempting to gain permits to conduct peddlery and when peddling their wares in cities and other built-up areas. They were also frequently denied permits to conduct business in various places. This was the case, for instance, when one Roma was denied a permit to run a funfair in Lilla Sköndal outside Stockholm in the mid-1940s.<sup>669</sup>

Another event, in Filipstad, described by a teacher at the mobile gypsy school<sup>670</sup> at the beginning of the 1950s, shows the effects that driving Roma away could have on their situation. A party of Roma had come to Filipstad during the summer. One member of the party became ill with a severe heart and kidney complaint. She was denied care at the hospital in Filipstad. She was told to rest at the camp, which lacked hygienic facilities. The party had permission to stay there for three days, but the sick person's

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<sup>665</sup> Ericsson, Tom (2008), "Mellan kapital och arbete" ["Between capital and labour"] in Scandia 2008, page 263.

<sup>666</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 83.

<sup>667</sup> Survey response from Slättäng Police Superintendent District; Eksjö Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>668</sup> Survey response from Asker Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives

<sup>669</sup> Report from the Stockholm police, 10th Patrol District, 1/3/1950, YK 506, Vol. 2, National Archives.

<sup>670</sup> The mobile gypsy school is described in the chapter on the access of Roma to education.



condition made it dangerous to move. Despite this serious situation the police, whose pressure was, to say the least, brutal”, demanded that the party move on as they did not have permission to stay where they were.<sup>671</sup> However, moving required money, which was almost totally lacking in the camp. However, the Roma had managed to rent Folkets Park in Filipstad for an evening and had also obtained the necessary permit. But two hours before the entertainment was to begin, the permit was revoked by the police superintendent in Filipstad, which meant a further economic setback to the party as they were still forced to pay the rent. The next day, they were forced to move to another town and the sick person died some weeks later.<sup>672</sup>

## 7.4 The Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief

The official report of the Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, containing proposals for a new vagrancy act in 1923, has a section dealing specifically with how Roma support themselves. In many respects the Committee expressed the same notions about the application of the Vagrancy Act as the police authorities.

The Committee stated that “the nomadic way of life, pursued by a rather large proportion of tattare, involves a very real threat to society” and “their way of life is typical vagrancy”.<sup>673</sup> The official report displays an extraordinarily illogical line of argument:

“[T]he danger posed by the nomad to society is due to the fact that he neither has the means for his subsistence nor acquires such through legal activities.”<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Report by the teacher at the mobile gypsy school, 19/10/1951, p. 2, YK 506, Vol. 2, National Archives.

<sup>672</sup> Report by the teacher at the mobile gypsy school, 19/10/1951, YK 506, Vol. 2, National Archives.

<sup>673</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 84. On page 86 the members of the Committee express the same notion: “It is the Committee’s understanding that the wanderings of these tattare are in general to be regarded as vagrancy, and they may be treated as vagrants in accordance with both the applicable Act and the Committee’s proposals.”

<sup>674</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 81.

A practical interpretation was that one did not “take into account funds acquired through the way of life that is harmful to society”.<sup>675</sup>

In other words, this meant that “dishonest” earnings were not counted, either. The Committee also stated that “tattare and gypsies, despite property ownership rights and bursting wallets, are not protected from the application of the law as the proceeds from these properties or capital are not their livelihood, but are acquired through begging, fraudulent practices, etc.”<sup>676</sup> In addition, it was argued that Roma who owned property and had the means to support themselves should also be subject to action by the public authorities in accordance with the Vagrancy Act, e.g. involving detention or hard labour. As has already been noted, the housing conditions of many Travellers was such that they owned either a small home, a house or a flat.

#### 7.4.1 Responses from the police districts

One of the questions the Committee wanted the country's police authorities to answer was how Roma supported themselves. A compilation of the responses shows that the majority of Roma were said to support themselves through trade and handicrafts. These were often combined with the manufacture of articles for everyday use. Handicrafts and trade could also be combined with day labour or agricultural work. It is worth noting that the number of people who supported themselves through agriculture or day labour was greater than the number who supported themselves solely through horse-trading. The fact that many Roma combined different ways of earning a living has also been demonstrated by historical and sociological studies.<sup>677</sup>

In the book *Zigenerska* [Gypsy Woman], the author Katarina Taikon describes how opportunities for Roma to support

<sup>675</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 81.

<sup>676</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 81. The White Paper's italics.

<sup>677</sup> Tervonen, Miika (2010), “Gypsies”, “Travellers” and “Peasants”: A study on ethnic boundary drawing in Finland and Sweden, c. 1860–1925, pages 225–236; Heymowski, Adam (1969), *Swedish Travellers and their ancestry: A social isolate or an ethnic minority*, pages 35–48.

themselves have been linked to their chances of finding permanent settlement.

“There are two simple explanations as to why we gypsies have a nomadic way of life. The first is that the settled population has prevented us from putting down permanent roots anywhere. The second is that we lived by occupations that forced us to travel around. That's how it has been and how, for some, it still is today. The public authorities and 'honest taxpayers' have competed to drive us away as soon as we drove the tent pegs into the ground.”<sup>678</sup>

The Committee received 680 responses to its survey from the country's police districts. The most commonly proposed measure was to attempt to prevent or ban Roma from moving and supporting themselves. Such requests were expressed by 77 police districts, but the majority did not specify how this was to be done. For example, one police district stated that:

“it is in the nature of this thing that nuisances must arise for that part of the rural population who receive the honour of a visitation ... A ban on itinerancy should be imposed.”<sup>679</sup>

Another police district's basic premise was a negative perception of Roma that also had a bearing on the action it proposed:

“As the nomadic tattare and gypsies, especially in secluded places, cause a great deal of trouble and also expense, both through direct begging and through offering worthless goods for sale, which, when circumstances are favourable, are offered in an importunate tone and which particularly private residents must buy or take in exchange for provisions and other valuable goods in order to avoid trouble and violence, thorough and effective regulations to restrain their rampaging through the countryside would be extremely desirable.”<sup>680</sup>

The same response indicates that two families the police authority had characterised as “tattare” lived in the district. According to the response, one family consisted of an older couple and the other of a widower and seven children, one of whom lived in the parental home. Both families owned their own small house and the widower

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<sup>678</sup> Taikon, Katarina (1963), *Zigenerska* [Gypsy Woman], page 89.

<sup>679</sup> Survey response from Björna Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>680</sup> Appendix to a survey response from Dals-Ed Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

also rented a croft where he raised a cow. Both families supported themselves through agriculture and the widower's children who had moved out of the parental home were reported to be agricultural labourers or factory workers. All of the children had been to folk school and were confirmed. None of them had been prosecuted for theft, begging or vagrancy. The police superintendent stated that the families were decent. The families were sometimes visited by other Travellers, but otherwise the police found nothing of note.<sup>681</sup>

Accordingly, it is hard to see how this police district's experience of Roma led to the rather negative descriptions that are also found in the response.<sup>682</sup> Some responses to the survey presented a perception of what was understood to be honest labour and what was not:

“Domestic tattare could be the only people who roam about nowadays. Their business is exclusively horse-trading. As this cannot readily be classified as work, it appears to me that an application of the Vagrancy Act to these people should be able to suppress the nuisances.”<sup>683</sup>

Others argued in favour of measures to tackle horse-trading.

“However, horse-barterers and horse-trading tattare often appear at markets, causing trouble thanks to their tactlessness in business and often cruel treatment of the horses. Appropriate action with the aim of excluding tattare from this line of business is thus desirable.”<sup>684</sup>

The occasional police district proposed banning “entertainments” and refusing to grant Travellers the right to conduct peddlery.<sup>685</sup>

The measures proposed by the Committee were, in many respects, based on the view that the Roma way of life was maintained by a means of subsistence “associated with their

<sup>681</sup> Survey response from Dals-Ed Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>682</sup> For example, survey response from Asker Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>683</sup> Survey response from a police superintendent district in Västernorrland County, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>684</sup> Survey response from Sollefteå Police Superintendent District, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives. Cf. survey response from Degerfors Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

<sup>685</sup> Survey responses from Mariannelund Police Superintendent District and Nye Police Superintendent District, HV, Committee on Legislation concerning Poor Relief, National Archives.

vagabond lives”.<sup>686</sup> Thus, the Committee felt that horse-trading should require a specific permit and that Roma should not be given such permits. Accordingly, Roma horse-trading would be restricted and become subject to supervision. Another important source of income identified was the staging of various types of entertainment. In order to arrange such entertainments, for example funfairs, permits had to be obtained from the police. As there was little opportunity for the police to deny these permits, the Committee felt that the police should be given greater powers to ban Roma entertainments.<sup>687</sup> Travelling around to sell goods at marketplaces and to private households was also to be banned.<sup>688</sup> The Committee's proposals for banning specific enterprises were not realised.

Nevertheless, the official report proved significant in several respects, as described in previous chapters. One of the conclusions is that the official report played a role in the discussions that took place during the inter-war period concerning the procedures and measures to be used against Roma.

## 7.5 General and local regulations

In one of the events described above, a Roma had obtained permission from the magistrates in Linköping and Västerås to run entertainments in these cities. The police in Linköping and Västerås had also attested that these entertainments had not had any negative impact on public order. The provision of public entertainment was governed by the 1868 regulations on public order in the country's towns and cities.. The general rule was that the person who wanted to organise such entertainment was obliged to apply for a permit from the police. This rule applied specifically to entertainments that occurred in a public place to which the

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<sup>686</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 90.

<sup>687</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], page 90.

<sup>688</sup> SOU 1923:2, Förslag om lag om lösdrivares behandling [Proposal for an act concerning the treatment of vagrants], pages 83–84, 89.

general public had access.<sup>689</sup> The police could deny permission if they suspected the event would have a negative impact on public order or if there was a risk of other crimes being committed in connection with the entertainment. The police would also provide entertainments granted a permit with a set of rules and could close down the entertainment if these were not adhered to or if the entertainment caused public disorder and seriously conflicted with the standards of public behaviour.<sup>690</sup> These regulations applied in cities and their surrounding areas and were expanded rather swiftly to encompass many other built-up areas.<sup>691</sup> In the 1920s, an increased number of municipal regulations were adopted that primarily regulated the opportunity to organise dances and other public entertainments.<sup>692</sup> In addition to the regulations' content, magistrates and local police authorities could decide on a new or supplementary set of rules that applied locally.<sup>693</sup> Among this varied collection of local rules in force in Sweden in the second half of the 19th century and first half of the 20th century was one regulating the sale of goods in public places. What were known as “travelling sales” were subject to compulsory permits in many places (e.g. Gothenburg, Malmö, Borås, Uppsala, Lund, Arboga and Kristianstad).<sup>694</sup> There were also regulations covering camping in a number of places. A significant proportion of the local regulations contained stipulations for checking up on “Travellers”.<sup>695</sup> In Kinna, Tollarp and several other places it was stipulated that

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<sup>689</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 55.

<sup>690</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], pages 56–57.

<sup>691</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 48.

<sup>692</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], pages 47–48.

<sup>693</sup> The county administrative board approved proposed stipulations from city councils or magistrates. SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 59.

<sup>694</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 63.

<sup>695</sup> This probably does not refer to the Traveller ethnic group, instead “Traveller” is used to denote all those who did not live in that place. Travellers and other Roma groups could, of course, be encompassed by the term “Traveller”. SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 73.

“[t]hose who ... provide accommodation to Travellers in return for payment must, within 24 hours of them moving in, report this in writing to the local police authority, including information about the location of the accommodation, the Traveller or stranger's name, profession and place of residence, and the day he moved in. If the Traveller refuses to provide information about himself in accordance with the stipulations issued, or if there is reason to assume that information provided by the Traveller about himself is not in accord with the actual situation, this must be reported immediately to the local police authority.”<sup>696</sup>

This regulation provided many municipalities with the opportunity to check up on individuals and parties passing through, to keep an eye on them and to force them across the municipal boundary. In *I betraktarens ögon* [In the eyes of the beholder], Hans Caldaras describes how his family were forced to leave Växjö because of the local regulations.<sup>697</sup> In the book *Zigenare det är vi* [We are gypsies] Katarina Taikon provides an account of how negotiations with the police determined whether Roma were allowed to camp in a certain place and how long they would be permitted to stay.<sup>698</sup> As indicated in the previous chapter on housing conditions, certain municipalities had introduced a general prohibition against Roma staying within the municipal boundaries, while others only allowed them to stay for short periods. The events in Ludvika described earlier forced the family to leave their camp in 1956 with reference to the regulations.<sup>699</sup>

## 7.6 Adult education and literacy courses in the mid-1960s

As has already been described, housing conditions for Roma were one of the key issues for the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954. Another was opportunities for Roma to support themselves. The picture painted of the group's future prospects was anything but positive. One

<sup>696</sup> SOU 1944:48, Betänkande med förslag till allmän ordningsstadga [Official report with proposals for general regulations], page 73.

<sup>697</sup> Caldaras, Hans (2002), *I betraktarens ögon* [In the eyes of the beholder], page 31.

<sup>698</sup> Taikon, Katarina (1967), *Zigenare det är vi* [We are gypsies], pages 22 & 25.

<sup>699</sup> Selling, Jan (2012), *Polisen och antiziganismen: en studie av Jönköpingshändelserna 1947 och Ludvikafallet 1956* [The police and anti-Gypsyism – a study of the Jönköping Events of 1948 and the Ludvika Case of 1956]. Ref. no. A2012/1803/DISK.

conclusion in the official report was that few Roma had been able to take advantage of the general welfare that was being created. It was argued that Roma's traditional sources of income no longer provided the means they required to support themselves, which meant that the group needed to find new ways of earning an income. These opportunities were hampered by the extensive illiteracy found in the group, which made it difficult for them to benefit from vocational education and enter the labour market.<sup>700</sup>

The Inquiry contributed to a concerted effort to improve the housing situation. Permanent homes were identified as being an important prerequisite for Roma work and education. The Government therefore provided state funding for municipalities that facilitated the settlement of Roma. The policy that followed at the beginning of the 1960s was based on the premise that as soon as housing conditions for Roma had improved, Roma would be able to support themselves. It was argued that Roma children were covered by the requirement to attend school and that the municipalities were complying with their obligations, which meant that within a generation Roma would achieve an equal position to the rest of the population. Illiteracy, with its social and economic consequences, was a generational issue.

This attitude was subject to a re-assessment as increased levels of settlement failed to make Roma self-supporting. Attempts to get Roma into work through the Employment Agency did not lead to their entry into the labour market. Nor was the group able to make use of the widespread opportunities available for retraining and vocational education, as these presupposed that the students had completed folk school.<sup>701</sup> Consequently, these measures were expanded to take in additional areas of society.<sup>702</sup> The lack of progress prompted the National Board of Health and Welfare to propose that the objective of state assistance for Roma "be changed

<sup>700</sup> SOU 1956:43, Zigenarfrågan [The gypsy question], pages 11–15 & 17.

<sup>701</sup> Ds In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 54.

<sup>702</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's request to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 30/11/1964, p. 1, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives; The National Board of Health and Welfare's request to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 30/11/1964, Appendix 1 "PM rörande ekonomisk hjälp till zigenare, som deltar i viss vuxenundervisning eller vuxenutbildning" ["Memorandum concerning financial assistance to gypsies who participate in adult education"], page 2, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.



from only being concerned with their settlement to also being concerned with communicating such a measure of academic knowledge that adult gypsies may adapt themselves culturally to their surroundings and profit from the retraining or vocational education deemed appropriate in each particular case”.<sup>703</sup>

The proposed change of course had already begun in the City of Stockholm, for example. Beginning in 1960, the Workers' Educational Association (ABF) arranged courses for adult Roma in Stockholm with financial support from the Employment Board in Stockholm. According to the gypsy advisor in Stockholm, solving the problem of illiteracy was a necessary condition for “successfully adapting gypsies to normal working and social lives”.<sup>704</sup> The educational activities conducted under the auspices of the ABF were in many respects experimental. The intention was to provide an elementary grasp of fundamental subjects (reading, writing and simple arithmetic) and a certain type of vocational education that was thought could be supplied via a needlework course and a music course. The teaching was arranged both in groups and individually in homes.<sup>705</sup> The ABF also organised discussion evenings on various themes in which lecturers, often representatives of public authorities and the teaching profession, talked about a diverse range of subjects that not infrequently touched on the “problems” of Roma.<sup>706</sup>

Adult education for Roma in Stockholm took up residence in an annex of Västberga Vocational School in 1964. The premises were equipped with workshop machinery and general hardware. A report on the school's activities in the first year describes the short-sightedness and experimental nature of adult education for Roma in Stockholm during the first half of the 1960s. When Roma came to classes, there was a lack of basic equipment and the hardware was not assembled. During the first term, the teaching took place in “somewhat primitive forms” because the pupils “had to begin by

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<sup>703</sup> The National Board of Health and Welfare's request to the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 30/11/1964, p. 2, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>704</sup> Letter from the advisor for gypsies in Stockholm to the ABF's Stockholm department, 22/4/1961, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>705</sup> Letter from the advisor for gypsies in Stockholm to the ABF's Stockholm department, 16/6/1961, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>706</sup> Programme for the ABF's Stockholm department, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

getting the equipment in order, assembling shelves, painting workbenches and repairing and otherwise adjusting the materials”.<sup>707</sup>

There is much to suggest that adult education for Roma in the mid-1960s lacked durability and objectives. It is not possible to find any documentation showing how the teaching was to be run, any instructions about which elements or subject areas were to be included, any directives about teaching aids or any pedagogical advice about how the teaching should be conducted.

A recurrent problem was the lack of study materials, a shortcoming that the education authorities sought to remedy from the beginning of the 1960s and for the next several decades. Texts and books intended for 8–9-year-olds were put in the hands of middle-aged men and women. Teaching aids and books perceived as suitable for the educational level of Roma as regards reading, writing and arithmetic had been designed for primary school pupils.

Nor has it been possible to find any signs of preparedness for any problems or difficulties that could arise during the courses. Another factor was that the staff and teachers involved had limited experience of teaching adults who had not been through the compulsory school system, which in all likelihood presented them with special challenges.<sup>708</sup> The adult education programme was characterised by courses being cancelled, new solutions constantly being tested for problems that arose, and a consistently low attendance rate among the participants.<sup>709</sup>

The coordination and planning of the adult education programme was commented on by contemporary actors. When a new proposal for a residential adult education programme was presented in 1963, it was criticised by a curator at Nordiska museet, who was also an expert on the Gypsy Inquiry of 1954. In the 1960s, the person in question was also an expert on Roma

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<sup>707</sup> Report from the ABF's department in Stockholm concerning adult education for gypsies in Stockholm in 1965, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>708</sup> Report from the ABF's department in Stockholm concerning adult education for gypsies in Stockholm in 1965, p. 4; Account of study activities among gypsies in Stockholm in the winter of 1960–1961, The ABF's department in Stockholm, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>709</sup> Account of study activities among gypsies in Stockholm in the winter of 1962–1963, The ABF's department in Stockholm, Gypsy Section, F 3b, vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

issues at the National Employment Board and National Board of Health and Welfare. He was critical of the adult education programme's objective and at the same time revealed his scepticism of the chances of Roma being able to absorb the education.

“The number of gypsies who could be expected to undertake such courses is very low. Those over 40 are almost completely impervious to schooling; those between 16 and 40, who this could involve (apart from those who are lost to alcoholism, criminality or lack of aptitude), are few. The majority are now settled and should be taken care of where they live. Those who come from Stockholm should be taken care of here.”<sup>710</sup>

Responsibility for adult education was moved from the National Employment Board to the National Board of Education and the primary municipalities in the mid-1960s.<sup>711</sup> When the National Board of Education took over responsibility, the adult education programme's level of ambition increased and soon came to encompass issues other than education as well. The National Board of Education's new undertaking coincided with the start of a research project at the Education Department of Stockholm University, which had been commissioned by the Stockholm Schools Directorate to investigate Roma children's school situation in Stockholm and draw up proposals and measures to improve the pupils' attendance and performance. The original research commission quickly grew in scale and encompassed a “rehabilitation programme”.

## 7.7 Research and administration in cooperation

Representatives of the National Board of Education, the schools directorates in the country's major cities and public officials from other public authorities gathered at a conference in April 1966 to discuss a curriculum for Roma adult education. The conference began with a speech from the National Board of Education's

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<sup>710</sup> Memorandum concerning the Gamleby Project, 12/6/1963, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>711</sup> Govt. Comm. 16/06/1966; Budget Bill 1966 app. 10.

Director-General, explaining that Roma would be prioritised like other “handicapped groups”.<sup>712</sup>

The Director-General asserted that everyone had the right to work and this right could only be made a reality through the completion of compulsory schooling. A professor from the Education Department had a similar attitude, but went on to outline the reasons why Roma needed an education:

“The adult gypsy learns to read, perhaps not so much to read books, but enough for reading newspapers, adverts, information and not least business documents.”<sup>713</sup>

Another line at the conference was that Roma needed to acquire the language in order to be able to converse with other Swedes. Up until this time, their had been impaired by poor vocabulary. The conference established that teaching must be grounded in reality in order to motivate Roma. One conclusion was that adult Roma should not need to learn to read by the same methods as seven-year-olds, and nor were primary school teaching materials appropriate for motivating Roma in their school work.<sup>714</sup>

Motivation, individualisation and concretion became the watchwords in the curriculum for Roma adult education drawn up by the National Board of Education. Teachers were free to shape their teaching to suit their pupil's aptitude and were allowed to find appropriate teaching materials themselves. The curriculum provided a framework for the teaching, and more or less the only subjects were Swedish, arithmetic and basic civic orientation.<sup>715</sup> This programme was later supplemented with teaching in metalwork and in distribution and office technique. Vocational training programmes were also to be linked to traditional Roma

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<sup>712</sup> Summary report of the conference at the National Board of Education concerning education for adult gypsies, compiled by Orvar Hjelm, 22/4/1966, Gypsy Section, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives. An analysis of handicap as a term in this context is made by Montesino Parra, Norma (2002) in *Zigenarfrågan. Intervention och romantik* [The gypsy question: Intervention and romance], page 166.

<sup>713</sup> Summary report of the conference at the National Board of Education concerning education for adult gypsies, compiled by Orvar Hjelm, 22/4/1966, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>714</sup> Summary report of the conference at the National Board of Education concerning education for adult gypsies, compiled by Orvar Hjelm, 22/4/1966, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>715</sup> Curriculum for the gypsy education programme, undated, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

occupations such as scrap dealing and working with glass, as well as the repair and maintenance of furniture, metal objects and clothing.<sup>716</sup>

The National Board of Education's efforts to furnish adult Roma with a basic education focused not only on knowledge and skills but also on social adjustment, or "incorporation into society", which was often highlighted as an important aim.<sup>717</sup> At a conference in autumn 1967, the objectives of the adult education programme were expanded and specified in more detail, at the same time as past experiences were evaluated. The organisers were the Stockholm Schools Administration and the Education Department at Stockholm University. Materials from the conference and the list of attendees provide insight into the main characteristics of policy towards Roma in the late 1960s. The list shows that there were representatives at the conference from eight government agencies and that 5 of the 31 attendees were women. None of the attendees represented Roma. One aim of the conference was to discuss how to coordinate a range of different measures in an extensive "rehabilitation programme", which was why the school for adult Roma had been opened. The conference invitations presented the following vision for the adult education programme:

"We firmly believe that the school for adult gypsies (not just in Stockholm, but all such schools throughout the country) is one of the most useful instruments for promoting and hastening the gypsy population's rehabilitation. The school could be the place in which adult gypsies can genuinely come to know "our reality", which they have hitherto been excluded from."<sup>718</sup>

The public authorities had confidence in the adult school's effectiveness. At the same time there was a clear lack of confidence

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<sup>716</sup> Report concerning experience of teaching adult gypsies in accordance with the NBE's decision 6/8/1971, Ref. no. 2-139/71, Västberga Upper Secondary School to Stockholm Schools Directorate, 24/5/1972, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Vol. 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>717</sup> Summary report of the conference at the National Board of Education concerning education for adult gypsies, 22/4/1966; Official statement concerning a motion in the city council regarding measures to provide adult gypsies a certain amount of schooling, case number 62/1966; Memorandum regarding gypsy education school year 1966/67, Stockholm Schools Directorate, 15/11/1966, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Vol. 3, City of Stockholm Archives

<sup>718</sup> Invitation to the working conference at Stockholm Schools Directorate on 13/9/1967 by the organisers Erik Ekman and Arne Trankell, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

that Roma could improve their situation on their own.<sup>719</sup> One of the key actors involved in shaping adult education for Roma concluded that modern educational planning was based on consultation with the pupils, but, according to him, this was not possible:

“They [Roma] give us no information. They have nothing to give. There is a deep-seated anxiety. What will happen then?”<sup>720</sup>

The Teaching Council at the National Board of Education argued that previous experience of designing tuition together with Roma had not yielded the desired results.<sup>721</sup>

The conference also gave people the opportunity to discuss the Sweden’s overarching immigration and minorities policy. A shift from what has since been called a policy of assimilation towards a policy of integration was noted in several contributions. It was stressed that the scope of general policy was increasingly allowing immigrant groups to preserve their distinctiveness. The Teaching Council noted that immigrant groups wanted to maintain their language, religion and other cultural expressions, but said it was not desirable to allow Roma to preserve or develop their distinctiveness. Nor did the Teaching Council think the Roma themselves were interested in such a course:

“Because of gypsies' situation, we don't know if they want to.”<sup>722</sup>

At the end of the 1960s, the City of Stockholm's adult education programme for Roma ended up collaborating with the research project undertaken at the Education Department of

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<sup>719</sup> There is a full account of this notion in Report 4, Effekter av konserverande handlingsnormer och föreställningar om verkligheten i en minoritetsgrupps strävan till anpassning i en förändrad yttre miljö: förslag till samordnat aktionsprogram [Effects of preserved action norms and concepts on the reality of a minority group's efforts to adapt in an altered external environment: proposals for a coordinated action plan], Stockholm, 1967, page 45.

<sup>720</sup> Minutes of the discussions that took place in the working conference at Stockholm Schools Directorate, 13/9/1967, page 1, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>721</sup> Minutes of the discussions that took place in the working conference at Stockholm Schools Directorate, 13/9/1967, page 1, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>722</sup> Minutes of the discussions that took place in the working conference at Stockholm Schools Directorate, 13/9/1967, page 6, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives

Stockholm University. The number of public officials in the city's bodies increased rapidly and in 1968 there were three psychologists and a social worker employed to “rehabilitate” Roma. In addition to these posts, there was one “gypsy advisor”, one advisor and fifteen teachers at the adult education facility, 70 teachers for Roma children in schools and around 50 social workers, all working directly or indirectly with Roma. At that point, the Roma population was just over 400 people, according to inventories. The research project conducted by the Education Department grew and by its close had generated more than 10 research reports and two doctoral theses.<sup>723</sup>

The expansion in the number of staff involved and the level of ambition increased the need for cooperation. When one part of the Education Department's research project was completed in 1968, a working group was appointed in the Stockholm administration to ensure that the various initiatives would continue and interact.<sup>724</sup> The working group wanted its efforts to result in:

“such initiatives as may be thought, directly or indirectly, to give rise to new ideas among adult gypsies, and their present or future children, concerning a new cultural identity in which the benefits and obligations now largely extended to them by society, may be integrated with the gypsies' notions of what is and should be “their own” as gypsies in Sweden.”<sup>725</sup>

The measures were to be implemented partly by a “reform group” for the adult education programme and partly by a family treatment group. The reform group was in charge of a didactic support group for teachers at the adult education facility<sup>726</sup>, parental groups for the pupils, university lectures, pupils' future planning and a democratisation project.<sup>727</sup> The family treatment

<sup>723</sup> Trankell, Arne (1969), *Ett forskningsprogram om invandrarnas och de etniska och religiösa minoriteternas problem i Sverige* [A research programme concerning the problems of immigrants and ethnic and religious minorities in Sweden], page 11.

<sup>724</sup> Opinions and proposals for the forthcoming rehabilitation efforts involving the gypsy population in Stockholm, 11/6/1968, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>725</sup> Report to the public officials and institutions concerned of 28/10/1968, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>726</sup> *En skolas framåtskridande och tillbakagång: Utvecklingen på zigenarskolan i Årsta läsåren 1967/68 och 1968/69* [One school's progress and regression: Developments at the gypsy school in Årsta in the school years 1967/68 and 1968/69], Stockholm, 1975.

<sup>727</sup> Trankell, Arne & Trankell, Ingrid (1968), *Det samordnade aktionsprogrammets förverkligande: integrerings- och konsolideringsskedet* [The coordinated action

group was attached to the Gypsy Section and the Child Welfare Board and concentrated its activities on “socially curative therapeutic treatment” through home visits.<sup>728</sup>

Several years after the working groups were set up, the rehabilitation activities were discontinued and a reform effort was launched at the adult education facility in Årsta. Angelina Dimiter Taikon gives her impression of the activities at Årsta in an interview.

“The teachers were more interested in the behaviour of Roma and in cataloguing and registering us than in giving us the knowledge we needed to get by in society. The teachers were often researchers who were conducting research on the pupils at the school. We were subjected to all kinds of tests and examinations. The Roma who went to Årsta Old School rarely learned anything of use. The activities weren't really arranged for the benefit of Roma, they had other aims. In many respects they were a part of Sweden's policy of assimilation. Roma had to learn household chores, Swedish home cooking and how laundry rooms worked. Roma also had to learn how they were to bring up children. My grandmother, who went to Årsta, had to learn to knit traditional Swedish woollen mittens. But she thought these looked dull so she worked roses and flowers into the pattern.” Angelina Dimiter Taikon<sup>729</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970s, new experimental facilities were established, including vocational programmes at Västberga Upper Secondary School.<sup>730</sup> In 1973 the Government decided to gradually phase out the basic education programme for adults at the school in Årsta, where the majority of the teaching took place. Pupils were no longer to be admitted after the academic year 1972/73. The adult pupils would instead be transferred to vocational education

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programme's realisation: the integration and consolidation stage], Report 7, Stockholm, pp. 10.

<sup>728</sup> Trankell, Arne & Trankell, Ingrid (1968), pp. 10–18; Opinions and proposals for the forthcoming rehabilitation efforts involving the gypsy population in Stockholm, Arne Trankell, 11/6/1968; Completion of rehabilitation activities among gypsy families in Stockholm, Bengt Andersson, Erik Ekman and Johan Granath, undated, Gypsy Section Archive, F 3b, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>729</sup> Interview, 3 and 6 April 2013. Ref. no. A2011/861/DISK.

<sup>730</sup> Report concerning experience of teaching adult gypsies in accordance with the NBE's decision 6/8/1971, Ref. no. 2–139/71, Västberga Upper Secondary School to Stockholm Schools Directorate, 24/5/1972, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Vol. 5, City of Stockholm Archives.



programmes.<sup>731</sup> Basic education for adult Roma was constantly under threat following the decision of 1973. One city councillor in Stockholm indicated in response to a question that uncertainty concerning adult education was manifest as early as the summer of 1972. Schools politicians in Stockholm did not know from one term to the next which educational activities would be allowed to continue. This uncertainty expressed by the politicians was probably even more marked for the pupils, who would only be informed very close to the start of term if they could continue the programme they had been in previously or if they would be forced into new forms of education.<sup>732</sup> The phasing out of the school in Årsta was postponed several times, but in 1978 responsibility was transferred to Tallkrogen folk high school and the last pupils were offered a two-year folk high school course to conclude their education. By the final academic year, 1979/80, a group of 14 pupils remained.

## 7.8 Adult education for Roma from 1976 to the 1990s

The closure of the basic education programme for adult Roma had been caused by new directives from the Government and the National Board of Education. In 1976, the Government submitted a bill proposing that an education programme adapted for all Roma groups be put in place as soon as possible and that the National Board of Education produce curricula, teaching aids and methodical instructions adapted to Roma needs.<sup>733</sup> The criticism of previous educational ambitions, which this bill was intended to address, was that they had been too weakly linked to vocational education and the labour market. As early as 1969, the Ministry of the Interior had concluded in a ministry publication that no

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<sup>731</sup> Memorandum: Re. problems etc. in connection with the basic education programme for adult Nordic gypsies at Årsta Old School ending on 20/5/1980, Varpu Edlund, Section for Gypsy Issues, Stockholm Schools Directorate, 27/5/1980, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>732</sup> Response to a question regarding the experience within the Schools Directorate of education programmes for gypsies, 6/10/1972, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archive.

<sup>733</sup> Government Bill 1976/77:100, Appendix 13.

analytical discussion of the structure of the programme had taken place in the adult education programme for Roma. Nor had there been any discussion of how to work in a pedagogical way to make adult pupils feel comfortable learning elementary reading and writing.<sup>734</sup>

Evaluations and investigations undertaken at the beginning of the 1970s had shown that few Roma pupils in the adult education facility had acquired knowledge and skills, and even fewer had found employment following the completion of vocational education.<sup>735</sup> Only 11 of 387 individuals (2.5 per cent) had undertaken a vocational education programme that led to a job. Roma from Finland, Poland and Portugal who had also taken part in the adult education programme had not found work.<sup>736</sup> A large proportion (43 per cent) of those pupils who had not previously had any education had attended more than 10 terms of adult education for Roma.<sup>737</sup>

The reasons for reforming the adult education programme in 1976 were described in detail by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues, which was attached to the Ministry of Employment. This group established that the programme offered to Roma who had just arrived in Sweden, through what was known as the organised transfer, had been experimental and originally based on a course intended for the “physically and mentally handicapped” (in its original form the course was called “Adjustment and training”, but was also designated curriculum X 21.2411). Evaluations had

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<sup>734</sup> In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], pp. 96–97, 100–101, 123–124; Memorandum regarding the Swedish Agency for Administrative Development's commission to review the conditions for transferring literacy teaching for gypsies to the municipal adult education programme, National Board of Immigration, consultation group for gypsies, 20/4/1983, Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>735</sup> Survey regarding the education and employment situation of Swedish Roma, National Board of Education, LÅ 4, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Vol. 5, City of Stockholm Archives; Ds A 1975:8, Zigenare i Sverige. Redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder [Gypsies in Sweden. Account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures], page 58.

<sup>736</sup> In 1969:1, Om organiserad överföring av vissa zigenare [Concerning the organised transfer of certain gypsies], page 100.

<sup>737</sup> Survey regarding the education and employment situation of Swedish Roma, National Board of Education, LÅ 4, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Vol. 5, pages 4 & 6, City of Stockholm Archives; Ds A 1975:8, Zigenare i Sverige: redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder [Gypsies in Sweden: account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures], pages 56–57.

shown that the package of courses had major deficiencies. The expert group concluded that the experiment in the years 1970–1976 had “been conducted in extremely unfavourable forms”.<sup>738</sup> There had been neither a special curriculum for the group, teaching materials for illiterate adults, suitable teaching aids, nor teachers with the right qualifications.<sup>739</sup> Another factor that complicated matters was that there were ten or so different courses offered to Roma born abroad who had recently arrived in Sweden. These courses had different principal organisers responsible for programmes with varying levels of difficulty and objectives. It was probably not easy for the individual to work out which programme was most suitable, and several types of education were in competition with one another.<sup>740</sup>

Having been instructed by the Government, the National Board of Education drew up a new curriculum that came into force in 1978. The curriculum (called GZ) was more extensive than previous policy documents, containing descriptions of the main elements, goals and comments. The work approach was to be adapted to the abilities of the group, which placed other demands on the teaching methods and the teacher. The educational programme's common basis was that it was to be “grounded in reality” and have a high level of concreteness. Study visits and workplace experience were key features.<sup>741</sup> The educational goal was to prepare the participants for Swedish social life and working life and to equip them with the

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<sup>738</sup> Ds A 1975:8, *Zigenare i Sverige: redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder* [Gypsies in Sweden: account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 170.

<sup>739</sup> Ds A 1975:8 *Zigenare i Sverige. redogörelse över försöksverksamhet för utomnordiska zigenare samt förslag till åtgärder* [Gypsies in Sweden: account of the experiment for non-Nordic gypsies and proposals for measures by the Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues], page 170.

<sup>740</sup> Notes from the deliberations of 8/12/1970 re. teaching of immigrant non-Nordic adult gypsies, Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues, B 4, Volume 1; “Pm: Något om zigenarförhållandena i Sverige” [“Memorandum: Something concerning the gypsy situation in Sweden”], 8/2/1972, Expert Group on Certain Gypsy Issues, B 2, Vol. 1; Expertgruppen för övervägande av åtgärder beträffande vissa zigenare [The Expert Group for the Evaluation of Measures Concerning Certain Gypsies], National Archives. An overview of the courses is provided in Ds A 1975:8, pp. 153–160.

<sup>741</sup> Särskilda anvisningar till kurs i grundutbildning för vuxna zigenare [Specific instructions for courses in the basic education programme for adult gypsies], Curriculum x21.23 92, National Board of Education, 15/6/1977, p. 2; Grundutbildning för vuxna zigenare [Basic education programme for adult gypsies], National Board of Education, Bureau V 3, 27/10/1980, Aleka Stobin's Archive 6, Volume 2, National Archives.

knowledge and skills they needed to benefit from vocational education or theoretical studies.<sup>742</sup> However, a programme for teaching adults to read had not been developed. There were still no teaching aids adapted for this purpose, which meant that the teachers had to produce materials themselves:

“[The teachers had to], quite simply, start out from the symbols, sounds, words and phrases known by the course participants and adapt the method accordingly. Traditional teaching aids are thus not particularly useful as they often focus on children and presuppose frames of reference that the participants do not have. This means that the teaching materials are largely produced by the teachers themselves and sometimes by the teachers together with the participants.”<sup>743</sup>

Teaching aids, further training for teachers and better home-language teaching were high on the list of requests from the working groups tasked with improving adult education and formed or re-formed between 1978 and 1986. Nevertheless, a recurrent observation was that this work was neglected and had not been sufficiently prioritised.<sup>744</sup>

The adult education programme appeared ineffective. When the programme in Årsta School finished in 1980, 14 pupils remained there for the final term. Many of them had been in the education system since the end of the 1960s and the majority were over the age of 45. Evaluations showed that in the 1970s close to half of the

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<sup>742</sup> “Memorandum: Uppläggnigen av AMU:s zigenarundervisning för vuxna” [“Memorandum: The plan for vocational education's adult teaching for gypsies”], National Board of Education, 25/9/1985, Gypsy Section Archive, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>743</sup> Grundutbildning för vuxna zigenare [Basic education for adult gypsies], National Board of Education, Bureau V 3, 27/10/1980, Aleka Stobin's Archive 6, Volume 2, National Archives.

<sup>744</sup> Resursbehov med avseende på den teoretiska delen av utbildningen för utomnordiska zigenare vid AMU-centrum [Resource requirements with regard to the theoretical component of the education programme for non-Nordic gypsies at vocational education centres], National Board of Education, Bureau V 3, 2/3/1975; Kartläggning av hemspråklärares och andra lärares behov av förberedande utbildning [Survey of native language teachers' and other teachers' need of preparatory training], National Board of Education, 29/9/1983; Pm: Uppläggnigen av AMU:s zigenarundervisning för vuxna [Memorandum: The plan for vocational education's adult teaching for gypsies], National Board of Education, 25/9/1985; Pm: Zigenare i grundutbildning för vuxna (grundvux) [Memorandum: Gypsies in basic education for adults (grundvux)], National Board of Education, V Department, 5/7/1988, p. 2; Memorandum Response to a communication sent to City Schools Commissioner Beatrice Ask by Karl-Gunnar Pettersson etc. on 13/3/1989, Social Services in Stockholm, Gypsy Section, 24/7/1989, pp. 2–4, Gypsy Section Archive, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

adult pupils had been attending basic education programmes for more than ten terms. Nor did it appear that vocational education was a route into the regular labour market. Evaluations from this period and up until the beginning of the 1980s showed that only a few per cent of those who had undergone vocational education found work. The experiments and smaller municipal projects that were initiated were in general active for a few years then abandoned.<sup>745</sup>

In the 1980s, the importance of education based on work placements was accentuated and study visits and workplace experience were given greater emphasis. At the same time, adequate work experience places were hard to find, and the vocational education centre's own workshops replaced practical experience in regular industries and the service sector. These work experience activities at the centres were strictly gender-segregated, which meant that the men usually had to try their hand at workshop activities while the women had to do needlework or work in the kitchen. Many centres were unable to offer work experience as they lacked the facilities. Placements in public contingency schemes were also common.<sup>746</sup>

Measures involving Roma adult education and all other activities specifically targeting Roma had their budgets reduced a few years into the 1980s. This can be traced back to the change of course that occurred in immigrant and minorities policy in 1976, with the Government and the Riksdag setting common goals for all immigrant and minority groups in Sweden. The National Board of Immigration maintained that there was no longer "any specific gypsy policy".<sup>747</sup> However, the new immigrant policy allowed specific measures for Roma, including adult education, within the scope of its general objectives. Criticism gradually emerged from central decision-makers, levelled against the "positive

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<sup>745</sup> Cf. Marta, Claudio (1979), *A group of Lovara Gypsies settle down in Sweden: an analysis of their acculturation*, Stockholm, pages 26–28.

<sup>746</sup> "Memorandum: Uppläggnngen av AMU:s zigenarundervisning för vuxna [Memorandum: The plan for vocational education's adult teaching for gypsies], National Board of Education, 25/9/1985, page 4, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>747</sup> Situational report ahead of the collaborative conference of 2–3 October 1984 at Häselsby Castle in Stockholm, National Board of Immigration, working group for gypsy issues, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Vol. 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

discrimination” of certain groups. The idea was that the situation of Roma was no longer unique in comparison with groups that had migrated to Sweden, which justified removing earmarked supportive measures.<sup>748</sup> The basic education programme for adult Roma that had been developed by the National Board of Education was discontinued at the end of 1986 and was subsequently included in the general adult education programme run by municipalities.<sup>749</sup> Some years earlier, several places around the country had felt obliged to reduce the number of study places due to low applicant numbers and diminishing resources.<sup>750</sup> The loss of resources also led to surveys and evaluations of initiatives being conducted in more limited formats or not at all. One working group at the National Board of Immigration, which organised the Board's initiatives, found that further, more extensive surveys planned for 1984 had had to be cancelled due to lack of resources.<sup>751</sup> It concluded that “current resources are sufficient to acquire in-depth knowledge in [only] a few municipalities”.<sup>752</sup> It was also evident that municipalities around the country lacked knowledge about conditions for Roma, which naturally made “positive discrimination” difficult.<sup>753</sup> When the adult education programme for Roma disappeared in the mid-1980s, the idea was that this

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<sup>748</sup> Ds 1997:49, *Romer i Sverige – tillsammans i förändring* [Roma in Sweden – together in change], p. 33; *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige: rapport från DO:s projekt åren 2002–2003 om åtgärder att förbygga och motverka diskriminering mot romer* [Discrimination against Roma in Sweden: report from the DO's project of 2002–2003 concerning measures to prevent and combat discrimination against Roma], Stockholm 2004, p. 9; Pm: *Uppläggningsplan av AMU:s zigenarundervisning för vuxna* [“Memorandum: The plan for vocational education's adult teaching for gypsies”], National Board of Education, 25/9/1985, page 5, Gypsy Section Archive, Volume 5, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>749</sup> *Romernas situation: situationsbeskrivning* [The situation of Roma: a situational account], paper published by the National Board of Immigration and the Nordic Gypsy Council in 1996, page 17, Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 3, National Archives.

<sup>750</sup> Situational report ahead of the collaborative conference of 2–3 October 1984 at Hässelby Castle in Stockholm, page 3, National Board of Immigration, working group for gypsy issues, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Volume 1, City of Stockholm Archives.

<sup>751</sup> The last major survey is thought to have been conducted in that very year, 1984. Cf. *kartläggning rörande den romska minoritetens situation* [survey concerning the Roma minority's situation], 9/10/1984, National Board of Immigration, Section for Gypsy Issues, Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>752</sup> Minutes of the consultation group's meeting in Stockholm on 12/12/1985, p. 3, National Board of Immigration, working group for gypsy issues, Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>753</sup> Minutes of the consultation group's meeting in Stockholm on 14/2/1985, National Board of Immigration, working group for gypsy issues, Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 1, National Archives.

activity would be absorbed into the general adult education system. Municipalities were given formal responsibility for the new basic education programme for adults and it was funded out of the primary municipalities' budget.

Typical of basic education programmes for adults was that appropriate teaching aids were not produced. The textbooks were produced for children and immediately proved inappropriate for use in adult education. The production of teaching aids for this purpose had to wait further, despite being repeatedly called for in the 1970s and 1980s. In the first education programme in the 1960s, stencils and short texts were used that the teachers had supplied to the pupils themselves. This *modus operandi* was made more or less permanent thanks to the 1976 curriculum for basic education for adult Roma. It stated that flexibility with respect to the pupils' varying abilities made it necessary to have adaptable teaching materials. This resulted in Roma being given poor teaching aids, the quality of which varied depending on the resources available to the teacher. A few teaching aids in Romani were produced by the National Board of Education in the 1970s and 1980s, but funding for this was withdrawn at the beginning of the 1980s when the special basic education programme for Roma was due to be wound up and absorbed into the general adult education system.<sup>754</sup>

One of the key participants involved in adult education initiatives for Roma in Stockholm claimed in the mid-1960s that:

“earlier impressions concerning gypsies' divergent behaviour remain and have been reinforced to a certain extent. There is a risk that, in spite of modern housing and schooling, a behavioural pattern will set in that is not consistent with the life of normal society and often leads to conflict situations. In the worst cases, this leads to a regression and, in the best, has a delaying effect on the entire assimilation process unless important efforts in the form of strong persuasive action are implemented ...”<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>754</sup> Memorandum from a meeting of the consultation group for gypsy issues, 19/5/1983 Aleka Stobin's Archive, 4 B, Volume 1, National Archives.

<sup>755</sup> Memorandum concerning cooperation between the Education Department at Stockholm University and Stockholm Schools Directorate, 13/1/1966, Gypsy Section Archive, F 4, Volume 3, City of Stockholm Archives.

Consequently, the lack of improvement was explained as the result of behavioural patterns attributed to the group itself. In this context, there is reason to point out that the research project led by the Education Department at Stockholm University in 1965–1968 denied ever having wanted to lay the burden of guilt on Roma. Instead, the term “own adaptive failings” was introduced and was described as the very opposite of a wish to moralise over the lack of progress. The treatment model entailed the individuals themselves arriving at “a successful solution to their problems ... which only occurs when they themselves perceive the value of these changes”. Even though a moralising attitude towards Roma was rejected, it seems that the responsibility for reaching new “insight” was placed exclusively on Roma. One doctoral thesis generated within the Education Department has this as a recurring theme. Roma chose their own exclusion. For example, Roma could accept adult education as a form since it was possible to “relate it to their own social pattern, but [they] largely rejected the educational content”. Roma had, according to this thesis, used the adult education programme in a way that led to increased segregation as it offered means of support that did not force them into contact with other groups.

## 7.9 Concluding remarks

Regulations, norms and personal treatment have all made it difficult for Roma to support themselves, which has had repercussions not only for their working lives but for their lives in general. The consequences were not unknown to those who formulated and implemented the relevant provisions. The aim was to make it difficult or impossible for Roma to support themselves in certain ways and one of the results was that Roma were driven further out of society to an even more marginalised position. At the same time, it was the very perception that Roma were not a part of society that served as justification for the need to take tougher measures against them. Thus the discriminatory measures had repercussions for the Roma’s situation in life.

The measures introduced between 1960 and 1990 were of a different type to those used previously. When Roma were



permitted access to housing, adult education was also introduced, the intention being to facilitate their access to the regular labour market. Policy took another direction, which in practice involved rules and regulations of the earlier period being replaced with measures focused on reform. The analysis undertaken in the late 1950s found that Roma would soon be unable to support themselves by their occupations, and this prompted measures to provide them with new opportunities to earn a living. One key objective of this policy, which had served as a guide since the 1950s, was to get Roma “to adjust” to modern working life; many of the measures have thus been about changing Roma. Adjusting and educating Roma to a normal working life was not just a matter of earnings and access to the labour market but was also part of a more comprehensive effort to intervene in their lives as individuals. The idea was for Roma to abandon their Roma affiliation through education.

What characterised many of these measures was that they were based on the enduring perception that Roma are to blame for their own situation. One aspect of this is that the public authorities blamed both the lack of improvements and the need to intervene on the group itself. Lack of success in getting Roma to adjust were attributed to behavioural patterns that the group possessed. Another aspect of this is that the public authorities also confused the circumstances of Roma with perceptions about their race-biological characteristics and culture. At the beginning of the 1900s there was a common perception that Roma mobility was a result of their inherent wanderlust, which was later superseded by a cultural explanation. This was also why municipal officials would not enter Roma in population registers in the 1950s, as it was believed that their way of life was not in harmony with that of the local population. The same notions are used in relation to Roma access to work, and they also guided educational initiatives on behalf of adult Roma. It was believed that employment conditions for Roma were limited by Roma themselves and that equality in the labour market would not be possible without steps being taken to change Roma themselves.



## 8 Concluding discussion

### 8.1 Introduction

This White Paper is a starting point in the task of strengthening efforts to guarantee the human rights of Roma. The large-scale discrimination that Roma have been subjected to during the 20th century is mirrored in the present day. The connection between this historical discrimination and the current situation of Roma in Sweden is vital if we are to move on and look to the future. This White Paper, therefore, represents an important step in the Government's efforts to improve the conditions under which Roma live.

One common perception, in both the past and present, is that the situation for Roma is more or less self-inflicted or even self-chosen. By describing the historical context, this White Paper can help to create a closer understanding of the Roma minority's situation today. The Government believes that knowledge of history is vital to any successful endeavour to strengthen the human rights of Roma.

When work on the White Paper commenced, it quickly became apparent that the area to be described was unexplored, that is, there was a considerable lack of knowledge of the subject. Furthermore, the period described is a long one, and many of the Roma affected by the policies pursued by the public authorities are no longer alive. Over the years, archives have had to discard many documents. Nevertheless, the source material still available is very extensive.

It has not been possible to describe all the conditions and discriminatory measures contained in this material. Nor has the White Paper been able to follow up on all the discriminatory actions and events that Roma have called attention to in their

dialogue with the Government Offices, or detail all the leads found in commissioned research reports. It is important to stress that this document does not provide any definitive answers to the themes it identifies.

The above means that the White Paper cannot possibly give a full knowledge of the situation. Nevertheless, what it describes is sufficient for the purpose of giving knowledge of the historical contexts that have affected how stereotypes and prejudices about Roma have emerged and been passed on from one generation to the next, and how these have shaped state policy.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to use the earlier descriptions of Roma's conditions in the 20th century to highlight a number of recurring themes that characterised central and local government measures against Roma. Based on the perspectives of anti-Gypsyism and equal treatment, a number of conditions are identified that have contributed to the conclusion that Roma in the 20th century were subjected to abuse and rights violations that affect their circumstances in life to this day.

## 8.2 Anti-Gypsyism

Nationwide surveys of Roma on the initiative of the state, along with studies by the research community, have contributed to the development of negative and enduring perceptions of Roma. What characterised the 20th century was that these perceptions were at the centre of many public measures. These policy measures assumed different expressions in different periods. One example is the practice of registering Roma, which occurred throughout the century.

During the first half of the century, it was the police and municipal officials who were tasked with reporting on the number of Roma and their living conditions to national commissions of inquiry and public authorities.

In the second half of the century, a period often said to mark the breakthrough of the welfare state, this practice continued, though with a different view of Roma. The municipalities were given special responsibility for guaranteeing Roma permanent homes. This was expected to have positive consequences, including

Roma children's access to education and Roma entry into the labour market. Remarkably, when the public authorities assumed greater responsibility for Roma housing conditions, for example, they also subjected the group to closer control and registration. As part of their activities, local and state authorities registered and surveyed the number of Roma and other irrelevant details regarding the personal situation of individuals. These surveys contain offensive details about individual Roma and represent a more or less systematic registration of the group, including family trees that stretch back to the 19th century. Roma have commonly been assigned codes such as "Z", "non-Z", "half-Z", "1/4 Z", with an associated number linked to a register and a personal file. The public authorities' work in relation to Roma has thus had a basis in and elements stemming from racial biology. It may be argued that the extensive registration of Roma went far beyond what could be considered justifiable today in the areas of work in which it was undertaken.

The scientific approach of the 20th century, with its diagnoses of Roma and its grounding in social medicine, psychology and anthropology, has often served to reinforce and maintain a negative view of Roma and the marginalisation processes that have affected conditions for the group. Surveys played a not insignificant role in the emergence of the prejudice against Roma that survives to this day. Common to much of this registration is that it built up and confirmed, rather than challenged, hostile and stereotypical perceptions of Roma.

An examination of political motives and measures during the first half of the 1950s shows that actions such as registration, sterilisation, taking children into care, expulsion and refusal to include Roma in the census were all justified and carried out on the basis of assumptions that Roma were to be eradicated and were unwanted, and that the measures would make their lives more difficult. Political measures have thus not challenged or attempted to change the unequal relationship that has existed between Roma and the majority population. It was the very perception that Roma were not a part of society that was used to justify the need for tougher measures against them. The discriminatory actions of the public authorities thus had further repercussions on Roma life in

Sweden since they exacerbated the group's stigmatisation and ostracisation.

Many of the measures that affected conditions for Roma were carried out pursuant to laws and norms at the local level. Roma individuals have described how they were subjected to extensive discrimination that had seriously damaged not only their chances of living the kind of life they wanted but also their chances of developing and asserting their identity.

This White Paper describes the motives and actions of society, in the shape of municipalities, county councils and the state. The division of responsibility among them has varied throughout the 20th century. Attributing responsibility to a single actor, authority, municipality or state body is no easy matter since the various political demands and measures were prepared and applied at different levels of society. The Riksdag and the Government are responsible for legislation and national policies. Throughout the 20th century, the Church of Sweden was a part of the State and had the power to change or challenge policy at both the national and local levels. The National Board of Health and Welfare was of the opinion that sterilisation could be imposed as a condition for mothers' assistance and that Roma should not have unconditional access to such assistance. The Board acted on mandates from the Riksdag and the Government, and municipal actions in this connection were simply an extension of national policy. The police authorities' response to many of the inventories was that powerful measures were needed against Roma. The actions of municipal administrations show that measures to promote equal access to the labour market were inconceivable without efforts to change Roma themselves.

It should be noted that many of the measures were applied concurrently and were applied to many Roma in a given context, which means there is every reason to conclude that policies in the first half of the 20th century were extremely repressive. The account also shows that the consequences cannot have been unknown, either to those who formulated the regulations or to those who applied them. Roma have been subjected to sterilisation and expulsion. They were barred from school and from entering Sweden, and the measures taken against those living here confirmed that Roma were not a part of society. It is in the light of

society's attitude – that Roma were unwanted and were not to multiply or become too numerous – that the various political measures should be scrutinised and understood.

A recurring theme throughout the 20th century was that actors other than Roma defined what the the problem was and what was to be done about it. To a great extent, Roma remained outside the democratic processes and did not have the opportunity to participate in formulating the issues of direct concern to them. The political discourse at the beginning of the century assumed that special measures would solve the “tattare and gypsy question”, while from the late 1950s the national interest focused exclusively on the “gypsy question”. This is not to say that Travellers gained equal treatment in society in the latter half of the 20th century. Public attitudes towards them continued to dictate how they were treated. Many Travellers have testified that the repression caused them to conceal their identity and thereby lose access to their culture and their own language.

Another theme spanning the entire 20th century is that several of the measures were based on the assumption that Roma themselves were to blame for their situation. The blame for municipalities' refusal to include Roma in the census was often attributed to what was seen as Roma's nomadic way of life. The blame for the sterilisation of Roma was not infrequently attributed to Roma's poor circumstances, meagre housing conditions and their lifelong experience of children being taken into care. This basic premise that Roma are to blame for their own situation has been an enduring one and has served to justify discriminatory measures. When the measures were not thought to have the intended effect, the reasons for this were sought among the Roma and not among the public authorities.

Characteristic of many of the political measures introduced during the second half of the 20th century was the reform focus of local and state initiatives. Roma were allowed housing. However, many of the measures were based on a perceived norm with which Roma were compared. The dominant view of Roma both in society and among municipalities was that they were not of sound mind or able to take responsibility. Roma were to be adjusted, made to fit in and be convinced of what was in their own best interests. In practice, this came to mean that public officials' influence over

Roma increased, since the public authorities acquired greater opportunity and powers to control and intervene in the personal lives of individuals. Roma were to be rescued from their inferior way of life and be brought within the framework of social care. Society was to be the protector of Roma – from themselves and their culture. This brought the contrasts between the normal and the divergent into sharp relief. The nurturing aspects of these measures often took the form of far-reaching intrusions into the lives of individuals, and the watchwords for this policy were adjustment and fitting in.

Roma experience of discrimination today shows that negative perceptions about the group still live on and have not been questioned in any real way. This is a serious matter since, now as before, such experiences and the sense that one is living in a hostile environment adversely affect Roma's chances of fostering their identity as a minority with their own resources. It also affects the opportunities of Roma to participate in society on equal terms.

In light of what this White Paper lays bare, there is reason to conclude that Roma in Sweden in the 20th century were subjected to anti-Gypsyism, a fact that has been neither truly acknowledged nor impugned. Anti-Gypsyism is still part of everyday life for many Roma in Sweden and one of the reasons for their lack of faith in the public authorities and in the majority society in general. An important prerequisite for overcoming this lack of faith and gaining trust is the introduction of measures that combat anti-Gypsyism and challenge thought patterns that stigmatise Roma. Equally important is to acknowledge and take responsibility for the abuse and rights violations committed against Roma in the 20th century.



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