CHAPTER 4

The Development of the Romani Civil Rights Movement in Germany 1945-1996

Yaron Matras

This chapter deals with the emergence of political organisation structures and the shaping of political ideology in the Romani community of Germany, beginning in the early postwar years, and taking into consideration as most recent developments the participation of German-based Romani associations in international events in the mid-1990s. It is a brief introduction, rather than a thorough survey, but it attempts nevertheless to provide an analytical descriptive perspective. Based on the nature of the issues dealt with throughout the period under consideration, the identity of the clients served by the movement, the formation of networks and their structural typology, and the ideas and policies pursued, I have divided the development of the Romani civil rights movement in postwar Germany into four phases.

Phase 1 is defined as 'support of individual reintegration and early organisational attempts' in the years immediately following the war, and in the early years after the formation of the Federal Republic. Organised civil rights activities during this phase were predominantly oriented to the family or extended family, aiming at supporting, or indeed enabling the reintegration of individuals who had survived wartime persecutions.

Phase 1 gradually gave rise to Phase 2, which I define as 'the formation of associations and ideological consolidation'. The factors behind this gradual shift into a new stage were partly
internal, as individuals working on behalf of relatives and personal acquaintances gathered expertise and knowledge and began representing the interests of an entire community, leading to the emergence of ethnic awareness and solid operational structures; in addition there were external factors, since ideological consolidation was stimulated first by the confrontation with repressive measures that constituted institutional, government-backed patterns, and was later inspired by ideologies of civil rights movements outside the Romani community. There was thus an overlap between activities in Phase 1 and the roots of Phase 2 during the mid-1950s and the 1960s, with the formation of associations and ideological consolidation reaching a peak during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Phase 3, which began in the early 1980s and lasted until Romani civil rights issues became embedded, following the political transition in eastern Europe, in an international working context around 1992, was characterised by the prevalence of ‘constitutional and ideological debates’ among the associations. One of the central issues of controversy was the attitude assumed towards Romani immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who were not German nationals. Decentralisation of political activities over this and other issues was typical of Phase 3, contrasting with Phase 2, which was characterised by attempts at the centralisation of representation.

Finally, Phase 4 revolved around the ‘embedding of civil rights activities in an international context’ following the political transition in eastern Europe, the formation of dozens of Romani associations there, and the emergence of partnerships at the international level. Phase 4 coincided with the aftermath of German reunification, the termination of postwar reconciliatory thinking in Germany, the introduction of new restrictions on immigration and asylum, and rising racist violence. At the same time multilateral organisations such as the Council of Europe and the Conference/Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE/OSCE), and international human rights organisations increased their involvement in Romani affairs significantly. A still ongoing chapter in the history of Romani civil rights activities, Phase 4 saw German-based Romani associations encountering new opportunities and responsibilities, and with them the need for strategic and ideological reorientation.
Phase 1: Support of Individual Reintegration and Early Organisational Attempts

In 1945 survivors of the Nazi persecution began returning to their prewar places of residence in Germany. Most had nowhere to live, no jobs, and in many cases were suffering from severe health problems caused by the abuse they had been exposed to during the war years. Romani survivors were not the only ones returning. They joined displaced persons and other survivors and victims of persecution, who in the years following the war had started to create a network of mutual support and assistance. Their offices had been set up in the occupation zones and were run by the victims and survivors themselves, and it was to such offices that Sinti and Roma turned for support in securing residence permits, housing, and medical aid, and later to claim reparations as victims of racial persecution. In some cases, the organisational forms adopted by Jewish survivors, Communists, and other groups persecuted by the Nazis were copied by Sinti and Roma, who began forming their own networks.

The issues dealt with in this phase were very specific material needs. The ‘clients’ were usually members of the extended family, on whose behalf applications were made by relatives for permits to settle in caravan sites on the fringe of German towns, or for welfare and reparations as victims of Nazi terror. Though regular offices did not yet exist, and funding for such community activities was also lacking, in the early 1950s some groups appeared to have already adopted labels identifying themselves as associations working on behalf of Sinti or Roma.

The establishment of the Federal Republic saw the gradual takeover of social and welfare responsibilities by local German authorities, who were now, in the place of victim support associations and the Allied administrations, in charge of processing applications and reparation claims. They rejected all claims filed by Sinti and Roma on a wholesale basis, refusing to recognise deliberate racial persecution of Gypsies during the Nazi era. At this stage, the first seeds of Phase 2 – the formation of associations and ideological consolidation – were sown, as Romani representatives sought legal advice and took legal action challenging administrative decisions. Legal actions required a partnership between Romani claimants, activists on their behalf, and legal professionals, in this case from outside the community, an organ-
isational model which was to form the basis for the formation of civil rights associations during Phase 2.

The re-initiation in the early 1950s of centralised surveillance of Gypsies by the police, including the re-establishment of the Landfahrerzentralen (Central Police Registers of Vagrants) in places like Munich and Hamburg, provided evidence that the denial of victim status to Gypsies had a deep structural background in the political climate and identity of the newly emerged Federal Republic. This impression was reinforced by a court ruling by the Bundesgerichtshof (Federal Court) in Koblenz in 1956 in which Nazi persecution of Gypsies was defined as ‘measures aimed at the prevention of criminality’, thus justifying the wholesale denial of reparation claims. Further evidence was provided by the reluctance of German authorities to pursue complaints filed by Sinti and Roma against those responsible for the Nazi genocide on Gypsies, such as Robert Ritter, Eva Justin, or Sophie Ehrhardt, after testimonies by individual survivors had revealed their role in the systematic and organised persecution of Gypsies, and the failure of the judiciary to prosecute any of the persons involved.

Phase 1 had thus led to a growing awareness of the extent of the Holocaust, the difficulties of re-integration, postwar repression and unwillingness to assume responsibility for the atrocities of the past. The material problems with which individual Gypsies had been confronted, and for which they had sought solutions with the help of single community activists, had by now turned out to be a basic structural problem affecting the Romani community in postwar German society, one which could only be challenged by increasing internal community awareness and by seeking public support for a fundamental change in policy.

**Phase 2: The Formation of Associations and Ideological Consolidation**

Phase 2, the early beginnings of which went back to the mid-1950s and the challenging of legal and administrative restrictions, brought Romani activists a significant step beyond granting support and assistance on behalf of individuals seeking short-term solutions to specific material problems. Instead, activists began to challenge the image of Gypsies in German society and the policies that went with this. Phase 2 was thus characterised by the
evolution of collective awareness among the Sinti and Roma as an ethnic minority, struggling to change the attitudes of the majority and its institutions. It saw the gradual development of a group of activists who had gained expertise and were now willing and seeking to implement it not only on behalf of individual family relations and friends, but of the entire community in their areas of residence, and later on a national scale. These representatives interacted and exchanged views, leading to what we could now call a gradually emerging civil rights movement undergoing ideological consolidation.

It is difficult to assess the immediate implications of the First World Romani Congress, held in London in 1971, for the emergence of the Romani movement in Germany. Unlike the Congress and the International Romani Union which it formed, the German-based movement had not evolved out of an intellectual interest in Romani history or culture, but as a typical grassroots movement operating on behalf of individuals, later on behalf of a collective, on key issues of elementary freedoms of movement, security, justice, and material welfare. Indeed, fundamental issues around which much of the International Romani Union’s activities continue to revolve to this day, such as the standardisation of a written Romani language, the creation of a Romani encyclopaedia, or symbols such as a national flag and a national anthem, are often regarded with mistrust and even contempt in parts of the Sinti community in Germany, which remains protective of its culture and reluctant to share it with outsiders. A key issue for the emerging movement in Germany during the 1970s was, in fact, resistance towards any form of either central registration as Gypsies or outside interference with Romani culture, including research, this attitude being at least in part a result of the traumatic experiences with ‘racial biologists’ and their role in shaping anti-Gypsy policy during the Nazi era.

It is nevertheless apparent that the 3rd World Romani Congress, hosted in Göttingen in 1981, played a significant role in boosting the self-awareness and public relations of the emerging civil rights movement of Sinti and Roma in Germany, though the initiative and the organisational effort which enabled the congress to take place in Göttingen seems to have come from outside the Romani community. The key to the development during that decade can be seen in the involvement of the Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker (Society for Endangered Peoples), based in Göttingen. The Society had created a broad national basis of local
groups whose interest was focused on public activities on behalf of non-autonomous, small nations around the world, mostly in the developing world, whose cultures were threatened by the pressure of post-colonial majority societies, and who were often the object of severe physical repression. The German-based Sinti and Roma seemed to match the criteria of a people worthy of the Society’s protection and solidarity. By the end of Phase 1 in the development of their movement their activities were centred around two main demands: reintegration into German society through restitution of their citizens’ rights in the aftermath of the Holocaust, and the right to organise their community life free of the restrictions imposed by the postwar Federal Republic.

The second element, the right to a particular community life, was for many activists of the Society for Endangered Peoples reminiscent of the struggle of small nations in the developing world to resist the contaminating influence of ‘modern civilisation’ and to preserve an authentic, pre-colonial life-style and social organisation. The romanticism associated with the Gypsy life-style was thus recognised by the Society as an important potential resource by means of which popular political support for Romani self-organisation could be obtained. Support by the Society of the first demand, reintegration and repatriation, appears to have had much to do with the personal touch of Tilmann Zülch, the Society’s founder and long-term Secretary-General. Zülch, himself an ethnic German native of East Prussia whose family had been forced to evacuate their native region in the aftermath of the war, is said to have had his first encounters with Gypsies who, though like himself natives of East Prussia, had been refused repatriation in the Federal Republic on the grounds that they were not ethnic Germans. Faced with a problem of fundamentals of nationhood and national identity, the Society adopted the cause of struggling for the recognition of Sinti and Roma as German nationals and of their community as an ethnic German community, in order to reverse the injustice done to their compatriots.

The partnership between the Verband Deutscher Sinti in Heidelberg and the Society for Endangered Peoples became the driving force behind the promotion of Romani civil rights activities in the late 1970s. At the structural level, the Society contributed by supporting media campaigns, such as challenging the use of the word ‘Zigeuner’ in the media and introducing ‘Sinti and Roma’ instead, emphasising ethnicity rather than life-style. It also supported public demonstrations such as the rally in Bergen-
Belsen in 1979 or the hunger-strike in Dachau in 1980. Here the symbolism of sites of former concentration camps was for the first time exploited in order to address, in a deliberately provocative manner, the continuity of repression and discrimination. It thus challenged the self-image of the Federal Republic as a state and society which claimed to have broken with its Nazi past.

Above all, the Society’s contribution may be seen in the formation of an organisational network of Romani civil rights associations, where it has left a clear imprint. Hosting the 3rd World Romani Congress in Göttingen drew the public attention necessary to announce the formation of a federal organisational form, led by the Society’s partner, the Verband Deutscher Sinti in Heidelberg. The name for the new institution – the Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma (Central Council of German Sinti and Roma) – was modelled on the Jewish representation, the Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland (Central Council for Jews in Germany) though the word ‘German’ was chosen to figure more prominently here than in the name of the Jewish organisation, which merely includes ‘in Germany’, leaving the issue of origin and nationality/citizenship open. The Zentralrat of Sinti and Roma, it was decided, should emphasise the German nationality of its constituency. In addition, it recognised the partition of the Romani community into two groups, Sinti and Roma. At least two activists of the Society for Endangered Peoples joined the permanent staff of Romani Rose, who was elected President of the Zentralrat, thus institutionalising the Society’s participation within the Romani civil rights movement.

Like the Jewish Central Council, the Zentralrat, based in Heidelberg, emerged as a federal head office, with regional offices in each of the Bundesländer or federal states (though the regional association in Hamburg never actually joined the Zentralrat’s federal model, and the participating association in Lower Saxony broke away some time after its formation). Thanks to the mediator role played by the Society for Endangered Peoples, it was possible to negotiate a scheme with Helmut Schmidt’s Social Democratic Federal Government according to which the head office of the Zentralrat would receive political recognition and financial support. This was accompanied by a statement on the part of the Federal Government in which German responsibility for the Romani Holocaust was acknowledged. The scheme set a model for the operation of Romani offices in the Länder, most of which attained government recognition and financial support during the 1980s,
and led to the formation of government-backed foundations in some Länder whose task was to settle reparation claims by Romani victims of Nazi persecution.

Phase 2, which culminated in the granting of political recognition to and structural support for the Zentralrat, may thus be summarised as follows: following earlier activities on behalf of individual clients seeking short-term solutions to specific material needs, the entire Romani community in Germany was now regarded as the client population of the associations, which in turn adopted the German scheme of registered societies based on fixed statutes and a monitored budget, and run by term-serving elected executives. These associations aimed at a medium-term improvement of the socio-political status of their communities in Germany, challenging both administrative measures and hostile public opinion. From individual case-oriented work they turned to broader public activism, using the symbolism of continuity of racial persecution to draw attention to structural repression. Public opinion was addressed overtly and provocatively. At the centre of the ideological consolidation process was the notion of a community of Sinti and Roma as an ethnic-cultural minority which was part of the German nation, and whose political claims were based on the injustice and racial persecution its members endured during the Nazi era. With the acknowledgement of this injustice in the 1982 Schmidt declaration and the attainment of government support for representative structures and associations, the Romani civil rights movement in Germany was able to show a significant and impressive achievement. The federal representation model, borrowed from the Jewish community, used the administrative partition as practised by the state and its institutions as its blueprint. This was a unique model unknown in Romani communities in other European countries; it later led to separation and political competition and rivalry during Phase 3.

**Phase 3: Constitutional and Ideological Debates**

Phase 3 emerged in the early 1980s with the independent political course pursued by the Hamburg-based Rom & Cinti Union, and the gradual formation of other associations, not aligned with the Zentralrat, in the Rhine area, Hessen, and elsewhere. In organisational terms this phase was characterised by decentralisation of
structures and political issues, and a specialisation for certain groups of clients within the movement.

In the years from 1982 to 1984 Romani refugees, mostly from Yugoslavia, later from Poland, approached Romani organisations and asked for their support in preventing deportations to their country of origin and in attaining residence permits in Germany. The issue triggered debates within the Zentralrat and affiliated associations, which sharpened as the Zentralrat instructed its member associations not to support foreign Romani refugees, claiming that growing numbers of foreign Roma who ‘abused their guest status in our country’ might harm the image of German Sinti and Roma and so ruin much of the achievements of the German-based Romani movement. For the Rom & Cinti Union in Hamburg, led by Rudko Kawczynski, himself a stateless Rom, ignoring the issues facing refugees meant alienating part of the natural constituency to which the Romani civil rights movement owed its allegiance. Other support groups for Romani refugees from Yugoslavia and Poland also emerged elsewhere, leading in the late 1980s to the formation of independent Romani associations, led either by more veteran Romani immigrants from Yugoslavia, as in Cologne, Düsseldorf, or Stuttgart, or else by Roma of the Lovara tribe, as in Berlin, Krefeld, and Frankfurt. These joined regional and national campaigns aimed at drawing public attention to the plight of Romani refugees and negotiating settlement rights with regional (Länder) authorities.

In its campaign strategies, the refugee-support movement drew on the experience and symbolism of previous years, examples being the hunger-strike at the site of the former concentration camp Neuengamme near Hamburg in February 1989, or the seven-week camp erected as a sanctuary for over five hundred refugees at that site during the summer of 1989. Provocative action and demonstrations spread during 1990 to North-Rhine Westphalia, Baden-Württemberg, Bremen, and Berlin. While in Hamburg protest actions successfully led to the granting of residence permits to fifteen hundred Romani asylum seekers from Yugoslavia and Poland during 1990, public debate on the issue intensified with the arrival of thousands of Romani asylum seekers from Romania, and later from Bulgaria, via East Germany. The four-week march of some fifteen hundred Roma through the Ruhr district in January 1990 ended with a decree issued by the Minister of the Interior of North Rhine Westphalia, granting ‘de facto stateless Roma’ the right to apply for residence permits outside the
formal framework of asylum or immigration procedures. The
decree was later withdrawn, but it nevertheless represented a
breakthrough in the extent to which the Romani movement could
expect to challenge constitutional issues successfully on behalf of
its non-German constituency.

Phase 3 thus represented a shift away, at least in parts of the
established movement, as well as through the emergence of new
associations, from the older constituency of clients, and with it a shift
away from issues arising in the aftermath of the Holocaust and
especially away from the emphasis of German origin and affiliation
of the Romani community which had been central to the emergence
and ideological consolidation of the Zentralrat and its member
associations. In organisational terms, pressure through overt public
actionism challenged government authorities to seek settlements in
negotiations with representatives of specific Romani interest groups
outside the Zentralrat framework. These representatives formed
occasional strategic alliances, in effect creating an alternative model
of representation to the centralised Zentralrat.

The changes in issues, clients, and organisational structure
coincided with a change in ideological thinking and argumenta-
tion. The actions on behalf of Romani refugees and immigrants
threatened by expulsion challenged constitutional issues that had
been left outside the focus of the movement in its first two phases.
They now combined the historical experience of the Holocaust
with restrictive asylum and immigration policy in contemporary
Germany, deriving their demand for a special residence status to
be granted to contingents of Roma from a historical responsibility
which they claimed Germany had towards the Romani people. As
alliances were formed between Romani refugees from various
countries and tribes, veteran immigrants, and German nationals
among the Roma, the ideological common denominator became
a pan-European Romani nationalism which crossed the tra-
ditional boundaries of clan-structure, tribal affiliation, and
country of origin. This movement now sought outside inter-
vention on the part of European, American, and Israeli politi-
cians, international human rights organisations and multilateral
institutions such as the Council of Europe and the United
Nations, defining itself in opposition to state policy and even to
some key constitutional concepts in Germany, such as the
coupling of nationhood, citizenship and ethnicity, and breaking
off from the inner-German conciliatory tone which had domi-
nated Zentralrat activities so far.
In contrast with Phases 1 and 2, where the Romani movement aimed at having its constituency included into the constitutional framework of mainstream Germany, in Phase 3 the refugee movement demanded that Roma be exempted from the restrictions on immigration which the constitution imposed, arguing that there was no state in which Roma were granted protection. It was this ideological line which created a split between the refugee movement and the Zentralrat, which regarded the statelessness argumentation as a setback and a return to the undesirable image of Roma as ‘homeless nomads’, and as one which in effect challenged the reintegration ideology upon which the Zentralrat was founded.

Phase 3 was a turning point in the development of the Romani civil rights movement in Germany, for several reasons. First, it departed from its earlier tasks centred around the established families of German Sinti and Roma, as parts of the movement pursued political goals which led to the adoption of a pan-European perspective on Romani history and destiny. The founding of EUROM, an attempt to create a European Romani umbrella association, at a congress in Mühlheim/Ruhr in November 1990, was representative of this process. Second, it no longer copied other movements and organisational structures, but became itself a target for imitation by many local immigrant and minority associations in Germany. Romani leaders often assumed leading roles in multiethnic anti-racist alliances; in 1989 Rudko Kawczynski was nominated by the Green Party as its symbolic top candidate for the European elections. Finally, it succeeded in stimulating interest and action in Germany on behalf of Romani communities in eastern Europe, though this was an indirect and only marginally intentional outcome of its activities. Challenged by the Romani refugee movement, the traditional Romani leadership around the Zentralrat and government administration needed to demonstrate their support for Romani communities in the East.

**Phase 4: Embedding of Civil Rights Activities in an International Context**

The withdrawal of the Roma decree in North Rhine Westphalia was accompanied in 1991 by the announcement of a New Refugee Policy, later adopted under this label by the Federal
Government. The policy consisted of bilateral treaties with the countries of origin which extended German aid as well as token support for Romani-related development projects in return for uncomplicated ‘processing’ and admission of returnees. Such schemes emerged with Macedonia and later Romania, where the Zentralrat adopted one of the community projects. Indirectly, the struggle for settlement rights of Romani refugees was yielding at least some interest and attention to the fate of Romani communities in the East.

The transition from Phase 3 to Phase 4 was connected to the deadlock in the relations between the more militant parts of the Romani civil rights movement and German government institutions on the one hand, and the shift of interest from the national to the international or European level of politics and organisation forms on the other. One factor promoting this development which was internal to the movement was the emergence of a pan-European Romani nationalism in the context of refugee support campaigns in Germany. In this respect it is interesting to note that in Germany pan-European Romani nationalism did not emerge via the intellectual channel of the International Romani Union or the World Romani Congress in Göttingen in 1981, but ultimately through independent, local grassroots work with refugees. Other decisive factors can be seen in the overall political development in Germany in the early 1990s, as well as in the context of the eastern European political transition.

In Germany, the end of the postwar era was announced in connection with reunification of the two German states. In terms relevant to the Romani civil rights movement, the termination of the postwar era meant the termination of reconciliatory thinking in Germany, from which the movement had drawn much of its public legitimisation arguments. The revised Aliens Act of 1992 saw the removal of legislative and negotiation powers on immigration and asylum issues from the Länder and their exclusive assignment to the Federal Government, while the constitutional right to political asylum was restricted by the first ever amendment to the postwar German constitution. Both developments were closely tied to the increasing movement of refugees, and to some extent of Romani refugees from the East. Overall the result was a deadlock in the prospect of negotiating any further specific settlements on behalf of Romani immigrants with German authorities.

In eastern Europe, the political transition led to the emergence of violent and extreme nationalism in many regions, and to
increased hostilities against Roma. On the other hand, newly established Romani political organisations were quick to address the problems of their communities in international forums, drawing attention among other issues to restrictive government policies, as in the case of the citizenship laws of the Czech Republic, or of police harassment in Romania and Bulgaria. Such initiatives attracted the attention of international human rights associations such as Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch, which in turn encouraged multilateral organisations to take up the issue of Romani civil rights. Ultimately, it seemed that interest on the part of multilateral organisations was triggered foremost by the challenge imposed on Western governments by illegal immigration and continuing refugee movements of Roma from the East. Last but not least, the involvement of some bodies, such as the Council of Europe and the CSCE, in creating a new basis for Romani political participation was in part a result of direct lobbying on the part of Romani civil rights organisations, some of them based in Germany.

The adoption of resolutions in support of Romani rights by the CSCE in 1990, by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1992, and by the Council of Europe in 1993, and international events such as the European Union’s Seville congress or the Council of Europe and CSCE joint seminar in Warsaw, both in 1994, showed a shift in the centre of Romani-related political discussion to the international arena. The Standing Conference of Romani Associations in Europe was established as a discussion forum in 1994, with the prospect of offering multilateral organisations and governments a united Romani representation as a partner in the area of Romani civil rights and cultural emancipation.

In Germany these developments met with much enthusiasm among the pan-European nationalist, ‘militant’ and pro-refugee associations. The Zentralrat on the other hand initially remained critical of many international initiatives. Overtly it rejected proposals for special protection measures for Roma as put forth by the Council of Europe and the CSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities, comparing them to Nazi ‘Sondergesetze’ (special laws) and discriminatory measures. Looking beyond the polemics, however, it appears that the Zentralrat was concerned that the embedding of Romani affairs in an international agenda would deprive it of its leading role as the sole, officially acknowledged representative of Sinti and Roma in Germany, and would
reduce its status to that of one among many equal associations in the international arena. In addition, joining a discussion on pan-European Romani identity posed a fundamental ideological problem to the Zentralrat, which had originally embarked on a struggle to gain recognition as a minority which formed an integral part of the German nation.

The ideological debate around the minority and national status of the Roma in Europe became the central issue of discussion in Phase 4. Eager not to miss important developments, the Zentralrat reluctantly began participating in international events hosted by the Council of Europe and the CSCE in 1994. At its first such appearance at a meeting in Strasbourg, it presented a paper outlining its position on the Sinti and Roma as a ‘deutsche Volksgruppe’ (German ethnic minority). Contrasting with the Zentralrat position, the Rom & Cinti Union in Hamburg now renamed itself for international purposes as the Roma National Congress (RNC), seeking a militant Romani nationalist image while at the same time downplaying its German-based operational centre. Papers presented by the RNC at a CSCE consultation in The Hague in 1993 and at the Seville Congress called for a European Romani Rights Charter which would grant Roma political representation as a European nation.

The status debate, inspired partly by the opportunity to help shape documents and resolutions at the international level, thus centred around a long-term, pan-European perspective. It coincided with the shift from short- and medium-term actionism typical of Phases 2 and 3, to a cultivation of intellectual resources in the areas of information and education, where organisations such as Rom e.V. and the Roma National Congress drew on resources provided by multilateral organisations and private foundations operating outside Germany. Since many of these funds are available specifically as development aid to support activities in the area of civil liberties in eastern Europe, German-based associations came under pressure to adopt partner associations in the East and consolidate their pan-European orientation even further.

The relations with international and multilateral organisations in this phase were twofold: first, Romani civil rights associations sought to get attention from international bodies, to attain recognition as reliable Romani representatives and to gain access to funding and a part in development projects, as well as to become part of the decision-making process in Romani-related issues. Thus
they recognised a shift of potential decision-making processes away from national governments and on to international bodies. Moreover, international bodies were regarded and accepted as potentially useful mediators between Romani associations and governments, and were occasionally used to convey messages to governments. The dialogue between the Romani civil rights movement and the German Federal Government on a variety of issues can be said to have developed into such an indirect dialogue, mediated by the activities of international bodies. On the other hand, the increasing involvement of international bodies also led to occasional scepticism on the part of German-based Romani associations. Such was the reaction of both the Zentralrat and the Roma National Congress to the establishment of a Roma Advisory Council, comprised mostly of delegated government experts, at the Council of Europe in 1995. Participation in the international process was thus equally motivated by the need to monitor the activities of international bodies and ensure an overlap of interests.

While Phase 3 saw the Romani movement in Germany facing a dilemma as to whether and how to support non-German Romani refugees and immigrants, in Phase 4 it is the extent of their involvement in the ongoing ethnic and social conflicts around Romani communities in central and eastern Europe which will determine whether or not they will qualify as serious and reliable partners in an emerging European network of Romani associations.
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