

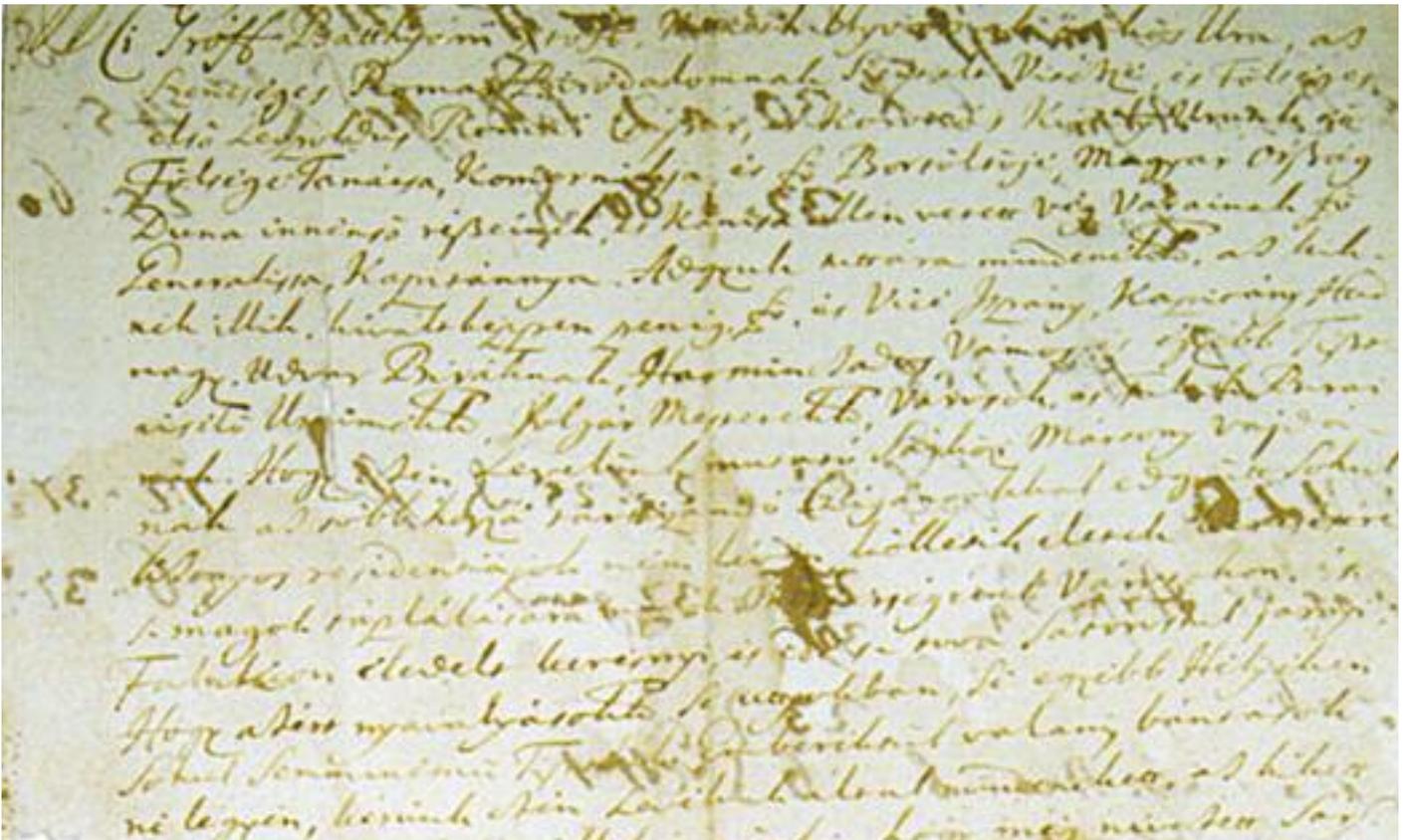
Roma in Stadt Schlaining and its neighbouring villages



First evidence

Groups of Roma left India 1300 years ago and throughout the centuries they wandered in small groups across Persia and the Ottoman Empire towards Europe. There were different reasons for wandering, not only economic and social situation, climate catastrophe but also political and religious conflicts.

In 1674 Count Christof Batthyany granted a group around Martin Sarközi a protection letter for his property. This is the first time Roma are mentioned in sources regarding the history of the Burgenland region. It can be assumed that Roma and Sinti have been living in the Burgenland area for a longer time as nomads and travelling traders.



"Letter of protection" granted by Count Christof Batthyany, 1674

Enlightened absolutism and attempts to "civilize" Roma and Sinti

In an attempt to "civilize" Roma and Sinti in the Habsburg empire, Roma were required to settle down and abandon their nomadic lifestyle and culture. They were no longer allowed to own horses and carriages from 1758 onwards.

The aim of all this was to turn Roma and Sinti into "useful citizens of the empire". Romani culture and lifestyle were seen as inferior, Roma and Sinti themselves as an "uncontrollable nuisance". Several times, authorities tried to forcibly assimilate Roma and Sinti into the prevalent majority culture. Having lost their opportunity to make a living from their traditional working area (trading with horses and goods), Roma and Sinti were allocated farm land at the outskirts of villages for which they had to pay charges. Their freedom to travel or leave the villages was severely restricted. The restrictions imposed on them were overseen by a local judge who had to report to the regional authorities about the Roma and Sinti living in his area.

For Schlaining, we find information on Paulus Szirmay and Mathias Sarközy living in Drumling and Goberling in 1784. In 1786 Paulus Sarközy is mentioned to be living in Drumling.

The situation of local Roma and Sinti in the 19th and early 20th century

In the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, Roma and Sinti used to live at the outskirts of villages and worked as unskilled workers, mongers, smiths, market vendors, horse traders or musicians. Ms and Mr Galanovits, locals of Goberling, remember that the Roma of Goberling used to collect mushrooms, herbs and berries. They produced pinewood chips to sell them to grocery shop owners in Schlaining or Bergwerk. Roma manufactured household devices like baskets, brooms, brushes and were skilled in repairing kettles and other vessels made of metal.

The farming population was happy to engage the services of Roma and Sinti. However, apart from business and trade contacts, there were hardly any personal, let alone amicable relationships between Roma and Sinti and the farmers.

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Some of the Roma living in Goberling also worked in the antimony mine in Schlaining. In the “Main Book of the Mining Workers” they were registered alongside with the note “Zigan” or “cigan” (“gypsy”).



Mineworkers

In Goberling, there was also a group of Romani musicians called “Zigeunerbanda” which paraded from house to house on high holidays and received goods or money in return for their music performances.

„Kummt das neue Jahr herein,
lustig und fröhlich muaß ma sein.
Wos wünschen wir dem Hausherrn in diesem
neuen Jahr?
Wir wünschen iam an großen Tisch,
auf jeden Eck an brotnan Fisch,
und mitten drin a Kanne Wein,
damit das ganze Hauspersonal kaun lustig und
fröhlich sein.
Wos wünschen wir der Hausfrau in diesem
neuen Jahr?
Wir wünschen ihr a seidnes Kload,
das steht ihr an wie a Nelkenstock.

Wos wünschen wir dem Hausburschen in diesem
neuen Jahr?
Wir wünschen iam a reiche Braut,
dei mit tausend Dollar kummen kaun.
Wos wünschen wir dem Hausmadl in diesem
neuen Jahr?
Wir wünschen ihr an reichen Bräutigam,
der mit tausend Dollar kummen kaun.
Wos wünschen wir der Gesundheit?
Glück und launges Leben,
unser Herrgott soll euch behüten vorm Wasser,
vorm Feier, vor schlechter Kraunkheit.
Mecht a schein bitte um a Stückerl Speck,
kummat i leichter weg“.

Due to the world economic crisis in 1929, the need for unskilled workers and household devices decreased. Farmers could no longer afford the production and repair of goods, but rather resorted to producing and repairing those goods and devices by themselves. Thus, many Roma and Sinti lost their income. Their living standard decreased. The communities who had to take care of people in need were not prepared for an increased amount of social aid needed. Prejudices and resentments of the non-Romani population heated up against Roma and Sinti. The policy towards Roma and Sinti became more and more restrictive.

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In the inter-war period, authorities started to count and register Roma and Sinti by collecting their finger prints and making photos. Those efforts were used by politicians for their anti-Romani agitation which quickly led to exaggerated and manipulated figures regarding the numbers of Roma and Sinti living in Burgenland. Already back then politicians and members of the administration were discussing coercive measures such as the deportation or the sterilization of Roma and Sinti.

Settlement	list of settlements 1923	district administration Oberwart 1924	Census 1925/26	district administration administration 1930/31	Gendarmerie Worm 1933	provincial administration 1936
Total Burgenland	3.570	3.692	5.148	6.236	7.153	7.871
District Oberwart	1.388	1.846	2.545	3.130	3.555	3.912
Goberling	49		61	74	80	
Mönchmeierhof	32		41	49	55	
Stadtschlaining						257

excerpt from:

Österreichische Historikerkommission Band 23/2: Florian Freund/Gerhard Baumgartner/ Harald Greifeneder, Vermögenszug, Restitution und Entschädigung der Roma und Sinti, Wien, München 2004, S 29f.



Policemen checking the personal information of a Rom, his family can be seen in the background (inter-war period) (Bgl. LArchiv)



Roma in Southern Burgenland (Bgl. LArchiv)



Photo taken by a policeman during a search of a Roma settlement in Deutsch Kaltenbrunn, on the picture are people skilled in manufacturing chairs

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1938 – first coercive measures against Roma and Sinti after the Nazi takeover of Austria

Politicians from Burgenland, most importantly the former illegal Nazi Tobias Portschy, prepared coercive measures against “Gypsies” which were implemented shortly after the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany:

- Arrests, forced labour and later the admission to detention camps and concentration camps
- The prohibition to make music in public
- The prohibition for Roma students to attend schools



In May 1939 the local education authority in Oberwart ordered the exclusion of 1.071 Romani students from attending schools.

Settlement	Number of "Roma" school children	Number of "Aryan" school children	altogether	% of Roma children
Gesamt BSR Oberwart	1.071	3.733	4.804	22,3 %
Goberling	22	114	136	16,2 %
Mönchmeierhof	14	67	81	17,3
Glashütten bei Schlaining	17	23	40	42,5 %

excerpt from:
Österreichische Historikerkommission Band 23/2: Florian Freund/Gerhard Baumgartner/ Harald Greifeneder, Vermögenszug, Restitution und Entschädigung der Roma und Sinti, Wien, München 2004, S 64

Statistics regarding the numbers of Romani children required to attend schools in comparison to "Aryan" children

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First arrests and deportations

Until June 1938 232 Roma and Sinti were arrested in Burgenland. A year later, the police headquarter of Burgenland interned 3.000 Roma and Sinti as a preventive measure to combat crime. A third of them were women.

In 1940 the "Gypsy camp" was established in Lackenbach in Middle-Burgenland. People were accommodated in sheds without any sanitary facilities, 200 people were packed tightly together in a room. For lots of captured this was just an intermediate station before their transportation to the concentration camp.



Lackenbach – inmates of the Lackenbach detention camp

Confiscation and destruction of Roma settlements

Despite the majority of Roma and Sinti in Burgenland being rather poor, many of them did own houses, jewellery, considerable amounts of money, bank accounts, cattle as well as land.

The Austrian Historical Commission found out that in 1938, 1.261 to 1.656 houses were owned by Roma and Sinti. Most of those houses were destroyed on behalf of the local government after the deportation of their inhabitants:

"The Gypsy settlements shall be removed so that there will not be any traces of them left. Therefore, even foundation walls shall be removed and the area should be modelled according to the surrounding landscape. Moreover, it is important that names of places originating from Gypsies, like Gypsy settlement and the like, fade out of the minds of the local population."

Source: Letter by the governor of the Oberwart district to all mayors and police departments in Oberwart (11/11/1941), Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance, file 11.293.

The governor also issued an order for local municipalities to sell the property of Roma and Sinti and keep the profit for themselves.

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Porajmos – devouring, fragmentation – the genocide of Roma and Sinti

In 1941 2.000 Roma from Burgenland detained in Lackenbach were deported to the Ghetto Lodz in Poland. From there, the surviving people were deported to extermination camps. Many died during the deportation due to the bad conditions, others were murdered while having to do forced labour or were murdered in gas chambers.

Himmler's "Auschwitz-Decree" (16/12/1942) finally sealed the fate of the European Roma and Sinti. In the same year, 2.760 Austrian Roma and Sinti were deported to the extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most of the Roma and Sinti deported there were murdered in the gas chambers or died due to physical abuse, starvation, bad sanitary conditions or medical experiments conducted by the "camp doctor" Josef Mengele.

Of the 7.000 to 8.000 Roma and Sinti living in Burgenland before the war, less than 900 survived the Holocaust and returned to Burgenland afterwards.

Only a few Roma from Goberling and Rauhriegel/Mönchmeierhof returned. In the interwar period, roughly 50 Roma lived in Rauhriegel of whom only two survived the Porajmos.



The burning of murdered inmates in Auschwitz-Birkenau. The photo was taken in peril in Auschwitz-Birkenau by Jewish members of „Sonderkommando“ and it was smuggled out of the death camp with the help of Polish resistance fighters.

At least 143 Roma from Stadtschlaining and its neighbouring villages were murdered during the Holocaust

Last Name	First Name	Date of birth	Place of birth	Date of Death	Place of Death	Source
Horvath	Maria Anna	29.04.1900	Gainfarn	28.03.1943	Lodz	EM Stadtschlaining 24/1935
Horvath	Andras	15.01.1903	Goberling	08.05.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 8/1942
Horvath	Borbala	24.12.1903	Dornau	12.05.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 33/1939
Horvath	Gyula	02.06.1903	Goberling	14.06.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 54/1939
Horvath	Veronika	02.02.1904	Goberling	16.06.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 16/1942
Horvath	Emma	18.03.1904	Goberling	26.06.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 47/1903

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Horvath	Ferencz	30.03.1905	Goberling	29.06.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 4/1912
Horvath	Ferencz	04.04.1905	Goberling	09.07.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 7/1904
Horvath	Maria Anna	07.04.1905	Goberling	09.07.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 31/1921
Horvath	Pal	04.10.1906	Goberling	21.07.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 7/1941
Horvath	Adolf	10.04.1907	Goberling	29.07.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 42/1938
Horvath	Jozsef	28.05.1907	Goberling	02.08.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 10/1943
Horvath	Vilma	25.07.1907	Goberling	10.10.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 65/1932
Horvath	Istvan	31.12.1907	Goberling	14.10.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 26/1913
Horvath	Jozsefa	13.05.1908	Goberling	09.11.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 26/1927
Horvath	Anna	29.07.1909	Goberling	11.11.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 25/1905
Horvath	Karoly Robert	31.01.1910	Goberling	22.11.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 4/1912
Horvath	Hermine	22.03.1920	Goberling	22.11.1943	Auschwitz	EM Stadtschlaining 1/1937
Berger	Maria	17.10.1910	Goberling	13.12.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 24/1905
Horvath	Gizella	24.03.1911	Goberling	13.12.1943	Auschwitz	EM Stadtschlaining 15/1927
Horvath	Rudolf	19.01.1912	Goberling	21.12.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 20/1938
Horvath	Josef	28.04.1912	Goberling	25.12.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 14/1925
Horvath	Matyas	19.05.1912	Goberling	30.12.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 8/1931
Horvath	Magdolna	27.07.1912	Goberling	30.12.1943	Auschwitz	GM Stadtschlaining 16/1933
Berger	Istvan	23.08.1912	Goberling	17.01.1944	Auschwitz	EM Stadtschlaining 1/1937
Berger	Janos	14.06.1913	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 34/1898
Pfeiffer	Jozsef	03.03.1915	Neumarkt i. T.	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 136/1898
Horvath	Ferencz	30.03.1915	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 8/1903
Perger	Ferencz	27.06.1915	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 37/1907
Horvath	Mihaly	03.03.1917	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 4/1917
Horvath	Maria	11.01.1919	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 51/1924
Berger	Janos	18.11.1918	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 41/1926
Berger	Ferencz	26.02.1919	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 33/1931
Horvath	Istvan	23.04.1921	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 60/1932
Horvath	Erzsebet	04.03.1901	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 64/1933
Berger	Michael	23.12.1921	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 56/1935
Berger	Mathias	04.04.1922	Goberling	08.05.1945		GM Stadtschlaining 55/1939

Information about the lives and the survival or murder of another 115 Roma and Sinti is missing. They probably died in the Lodz ghetto or were murdered in the Chelmo/Kulmhof extermination camp. Due to data privacy laws, the names of the victims that historians found out cannot be published

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Discrimination of Roma and Sinti after WWII and the Holocaust

Those few Roma and Sinti who managed to survive the persecution at the hands of the Nazis and their collaborators now faced neglect and discrimination. In the years immediately after the war and in many decades afterwards, most of the Austrian society downplayed or even denied the crimes committed against Roma and Sinti.

Austrian authorities made it very hard for Roma and Sinti to claim financial support and compensation. Attempts by Roma and Sinti to apply for financial aid were either not taken into consideration at all or denied due to “the incredibility of the survivors”. Only a minority of the surviving Roma and Sinti were granted pensions for victims of the Holocaust. Those who had been detained in the Lackenbach detention camp remained secondary victims. They merely received 350 Schilling for every month they had been detained there.

An example from Goberling:

The property of Johann and Barbara Horvath and who claimed it

Johann and Barbara Horvath were a couple living in Goberling in the interwar period. They were persecuted as Roma during the Holocaust. Johann Horvath died in a forced labour camp in 1941 near Judenburg (Styria). Barbara Horvath was deported to a concentration camp and did not survive the Holocaust.

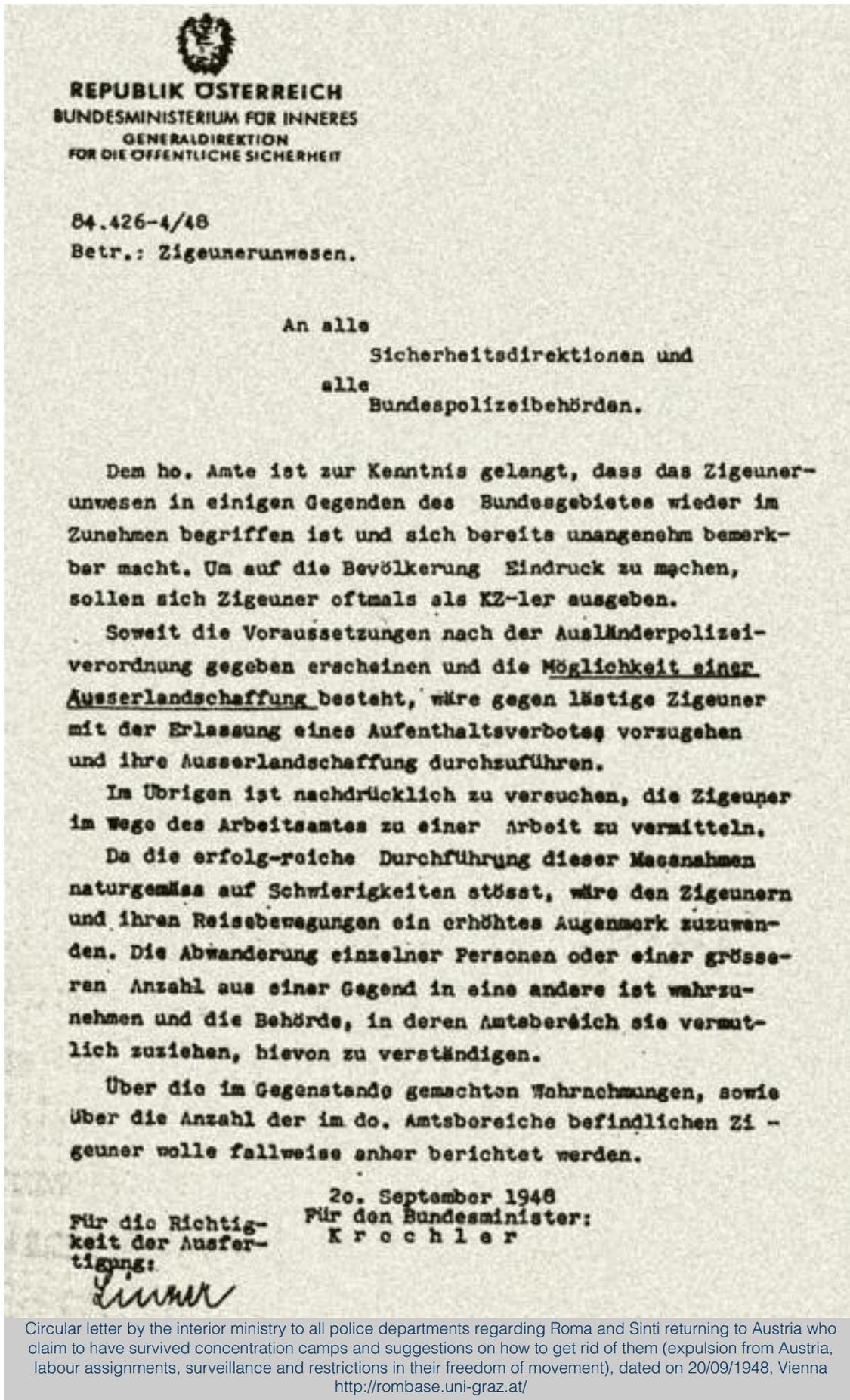
Their property was considered heirless property by a notary in 1958 as “there were no remaining relatives to be found”. Josef Horvath, however, a surviving great-grandnephew of Johann and Barbara Horvath, claimed the property once owned by his relatives. He received an oral will in the Auschwitz concentration camp and even had two surviving witnesses, a man and a woman, who were able to confirm him as the legitimate heir.

The mayor of Goberling, however, did not accept his claim as “in a concentration camp, men and women were not allowed to live next to each other. Therefore, the making of a will witnessed by a man and a woman cannot have been possible. The claims by Josef Horvath thus cannot be true.”

This wrong assertion by the mayor of Goberling was approved by the local court which subsequently did not accept the claims made by Josef Horvath. Even in 1958 it would have been a light task to find out that the mayor's assertion may have been valid for most of the concentration camps (though not all), but certainly not for the so-called “Zigeunerlager” in Auschwitz. There Roma and Sinti were not separated by gender.

At the same time, the municipality's claims for receiving the land on which Barbara and Johann Horvath's house once stood were approved. Their house was already gone at that point and described as “torn down during the Hitler-time”. The explanation of the municipality did not, however, mention, that it was they who ordered the destruction of the house. The municipality received the land for a remarkably low price, as noted down by a local evaluator in 1959.

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Circular letter by the interior ministry to all police departments regarding Roma and Sinti returning to Austria who claim to have survived concentration camps and suggestions on how to get rid of them (expulsion from Austria, labour assignments, surveillance and restrictions in their freedom of movement), dated on 20/09/1948, Vienna <http://rombase.uni-graz.at/>

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