A Contemporary History of Exclusion

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The post-war situation of the Roma in Hungarian society has been marked by dramatic alterations, due to regime changes, transformations in the structure of the social division of labor and the place of the Roma in (and outside of) it, shifts in the mutual perception of the majority and minority populations, oscillations in government policies, and much else. But continuous through all these changes is the fact of social exclusion. The authors, Balázs and György Majtényi are uniquely qualified to deal with the complexities of this history and to explain why the exclusion remained constant over it. A Contemporary History of Exclusion is a must read.

János Kis, Professor of Political Science and of Philosophy, Central European University

This important book examines the history of the Roma in Hungary after WWII. Theoretically engaged and historically sensitive, this account of the Roma’s position in Hungary through multiple regime changes shows how and why efforts to deal with the “Roma question” repeatedly reinforced inequality despite official pronouncements to the contrary. The authors add their own broader theoretical engagement to set Roma history against a broader landscape of revolution and intolerance. This is crucial scholarship for all those who are engaged in the study of Central Europe or in the examination of minority cultures around the world.

Kim Lane Scheppele, Laurance S. Rockefeller Professor of Sociology and International Affairs, Princeton University

This is a well-written, carefully researched and beautifully illustrated book on the history of Hungarian Roma—especially of governmental regulations or Roma-majority relations between 1945 and 2015. The authors call it a “counter-history.” And it is. Some of us had a somewhat rosier picture of the situation of the Roma during socialism (nearly full employment, less racial prejudice) and a darker view of post-communism (more poverty, more unemployment and racial violence). The book presents a somewhat nostalgic view of the “radiant future of liberalism” written in the current darkness of “illiberalism.”

Iván Szelényi, William Graham Sumner Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Political Science, Yale University