

Meeting with ROMA Community  
7/7/96

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
REMARKS AT 7/7 MEETING WITH ROMA COMMUNITY  
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY  
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Before we begin our discussion today, I would like to speak for a moment about the purpose of my trip to Hungary and to Central Europe. I am here to underscore American support for the democratic and economic reforms that are reshaping the landscape of the European continent. Here in Hungary, the transformation from authoritarianism to freedom is especially impressive. It is clear that Hungary's democracy and free market economy are flourishing and the building of civil society is well under way. The Hungarian people have embraced the values of democracy and are assuming the responsibilities that go with it. We Americans are especially grateful for the support Hungary is giving soldiers from the United States who are helping keep the peace in Bosnia.

Shortly after arriving in Budapest last night, I had the chance to lay flowers at the monument commemorating Imre Magy. As I looked at the bridge, I thought what a perfect metaphor it is for Hungary today. Clearly, this is not a static society. Hungary is moving from the past into the future, bridging the old world to the new. One of the truths that any successful democracy discovers, however, is that progress and change bring new challenges, and Hungary is no exception. To ensure that democracy continues to blossom, the values underlying democracy must be deeply rooted in people's everyday lives. That means that each citizen must be able to participate fully in all aspects of civic life.

Here as elsewhere in Central Europe there are many men and women joining together in voluntary activities, non-governmental organizations and community groups to make democracy work for all citizens. I am pleased to be able to come today to the Daily Help Service Foundation which exemplifies the spirit of citizen responsibility so necessary to democracy. I am pleased that the United States government, through its Agency for International Development, has chosen to provide some support for this center and other programs like it in Hungary.

At our discussion today, I am joined by representatives of the Gypsy Mothers Association, a group that was founded to protect the rights of Roma women and children. Solving the problems of intolerance, discrimination and the marginalization of certain groups in society is an important test of whether a democracy is living up to its stated ideals. In every country I have visited on this trip, I have met with non-governmental organizations working to promote tolerance and alleviate tensions among ethnic groups. These organizations are offering citizens in their communities the chance to take responsibilities and find

solutions to their own problems at the grassroots level. I look forward to hearing about the ways in which the Hungarian government, members of Hungarian society at large, and men and women within the Roma community are confronting these shared challenges, and I thank you very much for inviting me to come to see you here at the center.