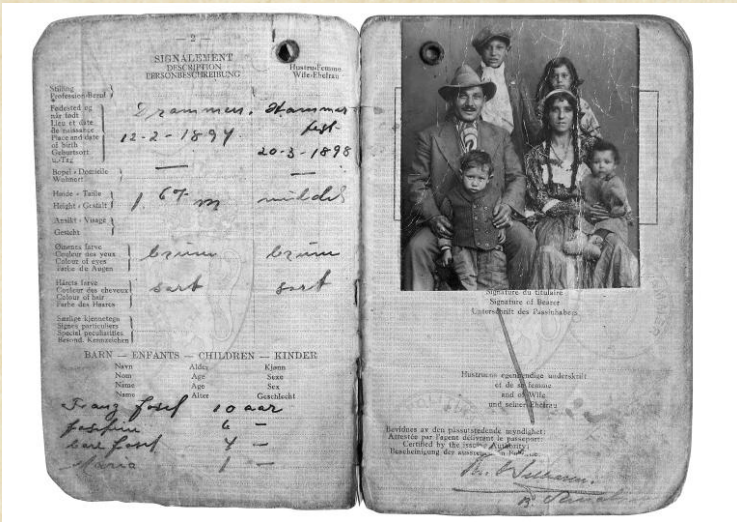




CZARDAS AND JEANNEDICA JOSEF

(Czardas, B. Drammen, Norway, February 12, 1894 - unknown; Jeannedica, unknown)



Norwegian passport of the Josef family 1930. In the middle Czardas, holding Karl (4) and Jeannedika with Jeanne (1) in her arms. In the back: Frans (10) and Sosefine (6). Karl died of TBC in French concentration camp. Josefina was killed in Auschwitz. (Foto: National Archives of Belgium).

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Czardas Josef was fundamental to the abolition of the so-called “Gypsy paragraph” in 1954, the Norwegian immigration law prohibiting the entry of Roma.

Josef was born in Norway and was a national citizen. Despite this, in 1934 **he and 67 other Roma were refused re-entry to their native homeland** after travelling to Europe. This was as a result of the so-called “Gypsy paragraph”, **which since 1927 had prohibited Roma from entering Norway**. In turn, the Roma had their citizenship withdrawn, and the state was able to declare that no Roma was living on its territory.¹

Instead, the group of Roma were transported to Belgium. The newspapers reported that the Roma women protested

especially vehemently. Two months after the deportation, Josef said in an interview, “Most of us were born in Norway, and we are Norwegians. Even if we have to walk back and forth a hundred times, we will do that in order to return to Norway. The treatment of us is a scandal.”² Later, **66 members of this group were deported to Auschwitz, and only four of them survived.**

Josef, his wife Jeannedica and their children avoided deportation by moving to France, where they suffered in-human treatment in the La Mollerie, Mulsanne and Montreuil-Bellay concentration camps.³ After the war, Josef applied for permission to re-enter his country. As his legal attempt was denied, he and his wife decided to enter by other means. An attempt to enter via Denmark failed. The second attempt was successful: **pretending to be a circus artist, Czardas and his wife entered Sweden**. From there, they managed to cross the border into Norway one night in 1954, and **became the first Roma in the country since the nation had declared itself “free of Gypsies” 20 years earlier.**⁴

1 This article is mainly based on the report Rosvoll Maria, L. Lien, J. Brustad (2015), »Å bli dem kvit «: utviklingen av en »sigøynerpolitikk «og utryddelsen av norske rom. Oslo. [“Getting Rid of Them”: The Development of a “Gypsy Policy” and the Extermination of Norwegian Roma] and research published in Selling, Jan (2020) Frigørelsen. Romers och resandes emancipation i Sverige och andra länder. [Becoming free. Emancipation of Roma and Resande in Sweden and other countries].

2 Rosvoll et al, p. 5.

3 Vogt, Carl Emil, “Drammenser lurte Døden.”, in Dagsavisen 2. Februar 2019. [“Man from Drammen escaped death.”]

4 Rosvoll et al, p. 151.

The plan was for the couple's other relatives to follow in their footsteps and demand their residency rights with their feet firmly on Norwegian ground. Josef and his wife managed to secure their own residency rights by proving their case in court, but the "*Gypsy paragraph*" was still upheld. Relatives of Josef tried to enter the country by ferry to celebrate a wedding in June 1955, but they were rejected in Fornebu harbour. The press noted the racist remarks made by a police officer, and for the first time, **the media was sympathetic to the cause of Roma** – or rather, to the principle that all are equal before the law, even Roma. Shortly after this incident, a second group of Roma arrived in Bergen and were allowed entry. However, the Norwegian justice department soon demanded their deportation. Police gathered the Roma and transported them on a lorry to Oslo, and put them on a ferry destined for Belgium.⁵

Among the group were the couple's daughter and grandchild. The press noted the absurdity that a family, who were citizens, be torn apart. They reported that Josef's wife cried out in despair as the ferry departed: "You Norwegians did not do the right thing by us!"⁶ **The Josef's took the case to court and won.** The couple's daughter and their grandchild were allowed to return to Norway at the cost of the state. The following year the "*Gypsy paragraph*" was abolished and Norwegian Roma who had survived the Holocaust regained their citizenship. However, research shows that the immigration board continued to discriminate against Roma and it took until 1972 for the couple's son-in-law (husband of Jeanne Josef) to be granted Norwegian citizenship.⁷

Sources:

1. Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities (HL Senteret) Archives, Oslo.
www.hlsenteret.no
2. RomArchive.eu: essay on Roma Civil Rights, Norway by Vidar Fagerheim Kalsås; essay on historical justice and combatting antiziganism by Jan Selling.
3. Romano Kher, Oslo: mediator Safira Josef, great-granddaughter of Czardas and Jeannedica Josef;
www.kirkensbymisjon.no/romano-kher

This biography has been written by Jan Selling

5 Rosvoll et al, p. 156-159.

6 Gripende scener da sigønerne ble utvist", Arbeiderbladet 14 juli 1955.

7 Rosvoll et al, p. 167-169.