

Zagreb
May 2013

O Porrajmos: The Romani Holocaust

Ian Hancock

To understand why Hitler sought to eradicate the Romanies, a people who presented no problem numerically, politically, militarily or economically, one must interpret the underlying rationale of the holocaust as being his attempt to create a superior Germanic population, a *Master Race*, by eliminating what he viewed as genetic pollutants in the Nordic gene pool, and why he believed that Romanies constituted such contamination. The holocaust itself was the implementation of his *Final Solution*, the genocidal program intended to accomplish this vision of ethnic cleansing. Just two “racial” populations defined by what they were born were thus targeted: the Jews and the Romanies¹. The very inventor of the term, Raphael Lemkin, referred to the *genocide* of the “gypsies” even before the Second World War was over².

It is also essential to place the holocaust of the Romanies³ in its historical context. For perhaps most Romanies today it lacks the special place it holds for Jews, being seen as just one more hate-motivated crisis—albeit an overwhelmingly terrible one—in their overall European experience. Others refuse to speak about it because of its association with death and misfortune, or to testify or accept reparation for the same reason.

The first German anti-Romani law was issued in **1416** when they were accused of being foreign spies, carriers of the plague, and traitors to Christendom;

In **1500** Maximilian I ordered all to be out of Germany by Easter;

Ferdinand I enforced expulsion and extermination orders in **1566**;

In **1659** the mass murder of Romanies took place in Neudorf;

In **1710** Frederick I of Prussia condemned all males to forced labor, had the women whipped and branded, and their children permanently removed;

In **1721**, Emperor Karl VI ordered the extermination of all Romanies, 220 years before the same directive was issued by Hitler;

In **1725**, Friedrich Wilhelm I condemned all those 18 years and older to be hanged;

By the end of the 18th century anti-Romani racism had received establishment sanction from the Church and the Academy after Heinrich Grellmann published his treatise demonstrating their Asian origin. He wrote that in studying Romanies he felt a “clear repugnancy, like a biologist dissecting some nauseating, crawling thing in the interests of science,”⁴ echoed in the words of

the Lutheran minister Martinus Zippel: “Gypsies in a well-ordered state in the present day are like vermin on an animal’s body.”⁵ Acknowledgement of the physical and social differences of the Romanies was being increasingly incorporated into German scholarly and ecclesiastical attitudes.

In **1808** Johann Fichte wrote that the German “race” had been selected by God himself for preeminence among the world’s peoples;⁶ two years later, the German nationalist Jahn wrote that “a state without *Volk* is a soulless artifice, while a *Volk* without a state is nothing, a bodiless, airless phantom, like the Gypsies and the Jews;”⁷ the fact of non-territoriality marked both Romanies and Jews as asocials, populations who didn’t fit in;

In **1830**, using the same techniques employed in the previous century, the Nordhausen city council attempted to bring about the eventual eradication of the Romani population by taking children away from their parents for permanent placement with German families;

In **1835**, Theodor Tetzner called Romanies “the excrement of humanity.”⁸ Robert Knox described them as the “refuse of the human race.”⁹

In his influential **1855** treatise Gobineau argued that human beings could be ranked into higher and lower races, with the white “Aryans”, and particularly the Nordic people within them, placed at the very top: “Aryans were the cream of mankind,” he believed, “and the Germans, the cream of the cream—a race of princes.”¹⁰ This had particular impact upon the development of German philosophical and political thinking;

In **1863**, Richard Liebich wrote about the “criminal practices” of the Romanies,¹¹ and described them as *lives unworthy of life*, the first use of a phrase which was repeated in **1869** in an essay on Romanies by Kulemann, and which was later to have ominous significance.¹²

The opinions of these scholars were having repercussions at the highest administrative levels for, just one year later, on November 18th, **1870**, Imperial Chancellor Otto von Bismarck circulated a brief demanding the “complete prohibition of foreign Gypsies crossing the German border,” and which stated further that when arrested, they were to be “transported by the closest route to their country of origin.”

When Alsace and Lorraine were annexed by the German Empire in **1871**, each was made responsible for the control of Romanies at the borders into other areas of the new Reich;¹³

Charles Darwin, also writing in **1871**, used racist language in referring to “the uniform appearance in various parts of the world of Gypsies and Jews . . . which contrast[s] sharply with all the virtues represented by the territorially settled and culturally advanced Nordic Aryan race;”¹⁴

Basing his ideas on Darwin, Cesare Lombroso published his influential work *L’Uomo Delinquente* in **1876**, which contained a lengthy chapter on the *genetically* criminal character of the Romanies, whom he described as “a living example of a whole *race* of criminals.” This was

later translated into German and had a profound effect upon German legal attitudes;

In **1890** or **1891** the Swabian parliament organized a conference on the “Gypsy Scum” (*Zigeunergeschmeiß*) and suggested means by which the presence of Romanies could be signaled by ringing church bells. The military was also empowered to apprehend and move Romanies on.

Under the directorship of Alfred Dillmann the Bavarian police established The Central Office for Fighting the Gypsy Nuisance in Munich in March, **1899**. Relevant documents began to be collected, particularly those pertaining to legislation and “criminality,” and compiled into Dillmann’s *Zigeunerbuch*, in which Romanies were described as “a pest against which society must unflinchingly defend itself,”¹⁵ and special instructions were issued to the police by the Prussian government to “combat the Gypsy nuisance.” The crimes listed in Dillmann’s book consisted overwhelmingly of trespassing and stealing food. One year later a policy statement from the House of Commons in Vienna, capital of the Austro-German Alliance, was sent to the Ministers of the Interior, Defense and Justice “concerning measures to reduce and *eliminate* the Gypsy population” (emphasis added).

Using Liebich’s phrase in the title of their book,¹⁶ psychiatrist Karl Binding and magistrate Alfred Hoche argued in **1920** for the euthanizing of those who were “Ballastexistenzen,” dead weight within humanity. Three populations were considered: those with gross physical disfigurements, those carrying hereditary diseases, and those in comas considered unlikely to recover. Romanies belonged to the second category, their genetically-transmitted disease being criminality; this rationalized the “preventative detention” of Romanies in Weimar Germany and was clearly racial: even if one had not committed a crime one was likely to do so eventually because criminality was a genetic, *i.e.* racial, characteristic;

By **1922** all Romanies in Baden were to be photographed and fingerprinted. The Bavarian parliament issued a new law “to combat Gypsies, nomads and idlers” and the Provincial Criminal Commission endorsed another dated July 16 1926 aimed at controlling the “Gypsy Plague;”

By **1927** legislation requiring the photographing and fingerprinting of Romanies had been introduced in Prussia, where eight thousand were processed in this way. Bavaria instituted laws forbidding any to travel in family groups, or to own firearms. Those over sixteen were liable for incarceration in work camps, while those without proof of Bavarian birth began to be expelled from Germany;

In further direct violation of the Weimar Constitution—which guaranteed equal rights for all citizens—after April 12 **1928** Romanies in Germany were placed under permanent police surveillance. In the same year, Professor Hans F. Günther wrote that “it was the Gypsies who introduced foreign blood into Europe.”¹⁷

On April 16-17 **1929**, the Munich Bureau’s National Center jointly established a Division of Romani Affairs with the International Criminology Bureau (Interpol) in Vienna. Working closely together, they enforce restrictions on travel for all Romanies without documents, and impose up

to two years' detention in "rehabilitation camps" upon those sixteen years of age or older.

On January 20 **1933** officials in Burgenland called for the withdrawal of all civil rights from Romanies; in May a law was introduced to legalize eugenic sterilization. On July 14, Hitler's cabinet passed a law against the propagation of "lives not worthy of life" (*Lebensunwertesleben*) called "the law for the prevention of hereditarily diseased offspring." It ordered sterilization for certain categories of people, "specifically Gypsies and most of the Germans of black colour" (*i.e.* the Afro-Europeans resulting from liaisons with African troops during the First World War). Other laws issued in the same year that were intended to 'Prevent Offspring with Hereditary Defects' and for 'the Reform of Habitual Criminals and Social Deviants,' directly targeted Roma.

From January **1934** onwards they were being selected for transfer to camps at Dachau, Dieselstrasse, Sachsenhausen, Marzahn and Vennhausen for processing, which included sterilization by injection or castration. Two laws issued in Nuremberg in July forbade Germans from marrying "Jews, Negroes, and Gypsies."

Starting on September 15 **1935** Romanies became subject to the restrictions of the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of Blood and Honor, which forbade intermarriage or sexual relationships between Aryan and non-Aryan peoples ("The Law for Marriage Health"). A telling policy statement issued by the Nazi Party read "In Europe generally, only Jews and Gypsies come under consideration as members of an alien people."¹⁸

The earliest Nazi document referring to "the introduction of *the total solution of the Gypsy problem* on either a national or an international level" was drafted under the direction of State Secretary Hans Pfundtner of the Reichs Ministry of the Interior in March **1936**. In June and July, several hundred were transported to Dachau by order of the Minister of the Interior as "dependents of the Munich Bureau (of Gypsy Affairs)." In this year Dr. Hans Globke, Head of Service at the Ministry of the Interior for the Third Reich who served on the panel on racial laws, declared that "In Europe, only Jews and Gypsies are of foreign blood," and race-hygienist Dr. Robert Körber wrote in an essay entitled "Volk und Staat" that "The Jews and the Gypsies are today remote from us because of their Asiatic ancestry, just as ours is Nordic."¹⁹

This sentiment was reiterated by Dr. E. Brandis in the same year, when he wrote that besides the Jews "only the Gypsies are to be considered as an alien people in Europe."²⁰ German romaphobia became transnational when Interpol established the International Center for Combating the Gypsy Menace, formerly the Bureau of Gypsy Affairs.

The main Nazi institution to deal with Romanies, the Racial Hygiene and Population Biology and Research Unit of the Ministry of Health, was established under the directorship of Dr. Robert Ritter at Berlin-Dahlem, the expressed purpose of which was to determine whether the Romani people were Aryans or subhumans ("*Untermenschen*").

In Berlin, Romanies were cleared off the streets away from public view because of the upcoming Olympic Games, and placed in a toxic waste dump. Pamphlets were distributed to those attending the games promoting antigypsyism among the general public.

From **1937** onwards the Wehrmacht High Command began issuing decrees ordering the exclusion of all Romanies from military service for reasons of “racial policy”.

In his **1938** address to The German Association for Racial Research, Dr. Adolph Würth of the Racial Hygiene Research Unit said “the Gypsy question is a racial question for us today. In the same way as the National Socialist state has solved the Jewish question, it will also have to settle the Gypsy question once and for all. The race biological research on Gypsies is an unconditional prerequisite for *the Final Solution of the Gypsy Question*.”²¹ This was further supported by Dr. Kurt Ammon, who stated that the Nazi policy “views the Gypsy problem as being foremost a racial one.” Himmler thereafter put groups of Romanies at the disposal of a team of doctors for experiments on sterilization techniques. Ironically, the more Romani ancestry an individual had, the less threatening he was seen to be. Himmler’s suggestion that a number of “pure” Romanies be exempt and subject to the “law for the protection of historic monuments” for future anthropologists to study was mocked, and never implemented.

In March **1938** Romanies were prohibited from voting, and in that same month a letter to the “Imperial Leader of the SS” from Dr. Werner Best, Head of the Nazi Security Police addressed the “initiat[ion of the] Final Solution to the Gypsy problem from a racial point of view.”²²

The first official publicly-posted Party statement to refer to the Final Solution of the Gypsy question (*endgültige Lösung der Zigeunerfrage*) was also issued at that time signed by Himmler, who also ordered the Bureau of Romani Affairs to be moved from Munich to Berlin.

Between June 12-18 **1938** “Gypsy clean-up week” (*Zigeuneraufräumingswoche*, in French *la Semaine d’Epurations des Tsiganes*) was in effect, and hundreds throughout Germany and Austria were rounded up and incarcerated;²³ in Mannworth three hundred Romani farmers and vineyard owners were arrested in a single night. In a parallel development to the 1938 Jewish expulsions, Romanies were expelled from the left bank of the Rhine in August. In that month too one Dr. Karl Hannermann wrote that “Rats, bedbugs and fleas are also natural occurrences in the same way as Jews and Gypsies. All existence is a struggle; we must therefore gradually biologically eradicate all these vermin.”²⁴ After September 4 Romani children were forbidden to attend school.

On December 8 **1938** Himmler signed a new order based upon the findings of the Office of Racial Hygiene, which had determined that Romani blood was “very dangerous” to Aryan purity. Dr. Tobias Portschy, Area Commander in Styria, wrote in a memorandum to Hitler’s Chancellery that “Gypsies place the purity of the blood of German peasantry in peril,”²⁶ and recommended mass sterilization as a solution.

An order released on December 14 **1938** stated that persons could be incarcerated on the grounds of their being inherently, as well as habitually, criminal, *i.e.* whether they were actually engaged in criminal activity or not, depending upon “genetic makeup” and potential threat to Aryan security. By the end of this year, large-scale roundups of Romanies had begun. At Buchenwald, a special camp for “pure” Romanies was set up, and Romanies were incarcerated in

camps in Nazi-controlled territories throughout Europe. Four hundred were sent to Taucha, others to Mauthausen, Gusen, Dautmergen, Natzweiler, Stutthoff, Flossenberg, Salzwed, Ravensbrück, Dusseldorf, Lackenbach, Westerbork, Malines and elsewhere. Individuals were categorized by percentage of Romani ancestry; if two of one's eight great-grandparents were even part-Romani, that individual had too much "Gypsy blood" to be allowed, later, to live. These criteria were twice as strict as those applying to Jews; if the criteria for determining Jewishness had been applied to Romanies, some 18,000 would have escaped death (18,000 was also the total number of Romanies in Germany at the time).²⁵ Romani women married to non-Romanies and children over the age of 13 were sent to Dusseldorf-Lierenfeld to be sterilized. Five thousand German Romanies were concentrated in the Gypsy Section of the concentration camp at Łódź.

On March 1 **1939** the Order for the Implementation of the Reich Criminal Police Department was issued, that stated "The decree of the Reichsführer SS of August 12 1938 orders the registration of persons living in the Reich territory who count as *Gypsies*. Once it has been established how many there are in the Reich territory, further measures can be taken."²⁷ Instructions for carrying out these orders were also issued in March, stating that "the aim of the measures taken by the state must be the racial separation once and for all of the Gypsy race from the German nation, then the prevention of racial mixing." Every police headquarters was to set up a unit to monitor Romani matters, and one or more persons were to be permanently responsible for Romanies.

According to the minutes of a meeting organized by Heydrich on September 27 **1939**, Hitler instructed that German Romanies and Jews were to be moved by rail into Poland. That order came on October 16: "With regard to the transportation of the Gypsies, we advise that the first transport of Jews is leaving Vienna on Friday, 20 October 1939; four wagons of Gypsies are to be added to that transport."²⁸ This may not have taken place, but in December Hitler issued a new decree regarding these transportations, forbidding all "Gypsies and part-Gypsies" not already in camps from moving out of their areas, and trains were subsequently reported moving east "packed with Gypsies."

In **1939** Dr. Johannes Behrendt of the Office of Racial Hygiene issued the statement that "All Gypsies should be treated as hereditarily sick; the only solution is elimination. The aim should therefore be the elimination without hesitation of this defective element in the population."²⁹ Justice Reichs-Minister Thierack would later write to Bormann that he "intended to make the Reichsführer SS responsible for the prosecution of Poles, Russians, Jews and Gypsies; Poles and Russians can only be prosecuted by the police if they lived in the area of the former Polish state prior to September 1st. Prosecution proceedings against Jews and Gypsies, however, should be taken without observing these reservations."³⁰

A memorandum from Leonardo Conti, Secretary of State for Health in the Ministry of Interior, to the Main Office of the Security Police, Kripo headquarters, and the Reich Health Department, Berlin sent on January 24 **1940** read:

It is known that the lives of Romanies and part Romanies are to be regulated by a Gypsy law (*Zigeunergesetz*) . . . I firmly believe, now as before, that the final

solution of the Gypsy problem (*endgültige Lösung der Zigeunerprobleme*) can only be achieved through the sterilization of full and part Romanies . . . I think that the time for a legal resolution of these problems is over, and that we must immediately try to sterilize the Romanies and part Romanies as a special measure, using analogous precedents . . . Once sterilization is completed and these people are rendered biologically harmless, it is of no great consequence whether they are expelled or used as labor on the home front.

The first mass genocidal action of the Holocaust took place in January or February **1940**, when 250 Romani children in the concentration camp at Buchenwald were used as guinea pigs for testing the gas Zyklon B, later used for mass killings at Auschwitz-Birkenau.³¹ Nazis in Alsace complied with an order to round up “criminals, asocials, the sick, French nationalists and of course the Jews and the Gypsies.” In this year, Nazi statisticians Wetzell and Hecht estimated that “one hundred thousand Gypsies and others” were scheduled for deportation to Poland, and were shipped between May 15-18.

In a speech delivered on February 29 **1940** to top-level Nazi party officials, Himmler said “The Gypsies are a question in themselves. I want to be rid of them this year if it is at all possible. There are only thirty thousand of them in the entire Reich, but they do great racial damage.”³²

On April 27 **1940** a joint order from NS Headquarters and the Chief of Police stated that “The first transport of Gypsies to the General Government will leave in the middle of May with 2,500 people.” The following day Reinhard Heydrich, chief of the Reich Security Main Office, sent out more precise instructions to chiefs of police and district governors in Germany in the so-called *Umsiedlungserlaß* for the “resettlement, arrest, and deportation of Romanies above the age of 17 from western and northwestern border zones.”

On May 18 **1940** Romanies were deported from seven assembly centers in the Old Reich to Lublin, located in the General Government. The first transport included 2,500 German Romanies, selected as full families wherever possible. The transport included 1,000 from Hamburg and Bremen, 1,000 from Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Hanover and 500 from Stuttgart and Frankfurt. The deportation to Lublin proceeded as planned, although subsequent police reports revealed that a further 300 had been “evacuated,” bringing the total number of deportees to 2,800. In Austria, the deportations to Poland were planned for the second half of August 1940.

An ordinance dated February 11 **1941** forbade Gypsies and “part-Gypsies” from serving in the German army “on the grounds of racial policy.” In July the Chief Administrative officer of Oberwart issued the order for the prohibition of the use of public transport by Romanies.

In Hungary Romanies were being targeted in the Nazi sympathetic regime led by Admiral Horthy. Between 500 and 1,000 Hungarian Romanies were sent to concentration camps in Transcarpathia.

On July 31 **1941** Heydrich, who had been entrusted with the details of the Final Solution, included Romanies together with Jews: “The Einsatzkommandos received the order to kill all

Jews, Gypsies and mental patients.”

On October 10 **1941** he proposed that the German Romanies be sent to Riga with the Jews instead of being sent to Auschwitz and Chelmno in Poland. At the same meeting, the motion that Litzmannstadt (Łódź) be chosen as the final destination for non-German-born Romanies was approved, and between November 9-11 five trainloads each transporting a thousand Romanies left from Austrian transit camps at Hartburg, Fürstenfeld, Mattersburg, Roten Thurm, Lackenbach, and Oberwart for Łódź, where they were joined by a transport of 20,000 Jews.

Of the 5,000 Romanies deported nearly two thirds were children. In December and in January Romanies were taken from Łódź to Kulmhof (Chelmno), where they were among the first to be killed in mobile gas vans.

On November 24 **1941**, repeating his official orders, the Commander of the Wehrmacht in Byelorussia stated “The Jews must disappear from the countryside and likewise the Gypsies must be eradicated.”³³

In early **1942** Romanies were selected for experimentation at Dachau and Buchenwald by Dr. Adolf Pokorny to see how long they could survive on sea water, claiming that they “must not only be conquered, but exterminated also.”³⁴ That same Spring, one thousand Romanies were shot and buried alive in a single action on a collective farm near Smolensk.

Nazi death squads entered Greece in June, murdering hundreds of Romanies. In Serbia, Military Governor Harald Turner announced—prematurely—that “Serbia is the only country in which the Jewish Question and the Gypsy Question have been resolved,” warning that “one must not forget that the Jews and the Gypsies generally constitute a threat to security and, as such, pose a threat to peace and public order; it is the Jewish nature which is responsible for this war and, as for the Gypsy, by his nature he can never be a useful member of international society.”³⁵ In Greece, fifty Romanies were murdered for each German casualty. In Croatia between 80,000 and 100,000 Romanies are estimated to have perished at the hands of the Ustaša, mostly at the Jasenovac camp.³⁶

On July 31 **1942** the Ministry of the Eastern Occupied Territories reaffirmed to the SS and police leaders in Riga the order that “the treatment of both Jews and Romanies was to be placed on equal footing (*gleichgestellt*).”³⁷ Romanies were being exterminated at Majdanek, Belsec, Sanok, Sobibor, Chelmno and Treblinka.

In Bucharest a policy statement that “for Romania, the Gypsy question is as important as the Jewish” was published. In the minutes of a September 14 meeting Justice Minister Otto Thierack proposed that “Jews and Gypsies should be unconditionally exterminated.”³⁸ A memo signed by Himmler requested data on Romani populations in Britain in anticipation of the eventual takeover of that country.³⁹

On January 26 **1943** the president of the National Criminal Police Association issued the following statement: “Political preventative custody can be ordered to stop any further children of mixed blood issuing from the willful continuation of sexual union between Gypsies and

Gypsies of mixed race, and those of German blood.”⁴⁰ In February the remaining Romanies were transported to Birkenau; the largest transport ever of Polish Romanies was brought to the same camp in March, and exterminated within the first month. Dutch Romanies began being transported to Auschwitz as well.⁴¹ A party bulletin entitled *Maintenance of the Race and the Genotype in German Law* stated that “Gypsies are of foreign blood, pursuant to German racial legislation; their political, biological, cultural and vocational separation from the German race has now been effected by means of the elimination of those of foreign blood in the same way as was [done] for the Jews.” In his memoirs, SS Officer Perry Broad, who worked in the political division at Auschwitz, wrote that “it is the will of the all-powerful *Reichsführer* to have the Gypsies disappear from the face of the earth.”⁴² He reiterated this elsewhere, saying “the Central Office knew it was Hitler’s aim to wipe out all the Gypsies without exception”.⁴³

The OSS reported on 20 October **1944** that “in Bulgaria, as elsewhere in Nazi dominated Europe, the Gypsies have been treated as an element which must be eradicated”.⁴⁴

Eva Justin’s book dealing with Romani children appeared in **1944**. In it she expressed the hope that it would serve as a basis for future race hygiene laws regulating such “unworthy primitive elements.” In May, when she had finished studying the children, they were all sent to Auschwitz and were killed there.

In the early morning hours of August 2-3 2, **1944** nine hundred Romanies at Auschwitz-Birkenau were killed and cremated in one mass action referred to as *Zigeunernacht*. On September 26 a further 200 Romanies, mostly children, were shipped to Auschwitz from Buchenwald, and gassed two weeks later.

Not one Romani was called to testify in behalf of his own people at the Nuremberg Trials that began in October **1945**. Current estimates now indicate that between one and one and a half million Romanies died during the period 1933-1945. If this estimate is correct, between 50 and 75 percent of the entire Romani population in Nazi-controlled Europe had perished at the hands of the Nazis, victims of racially-motivated genocidal policy.

At the Nuremberg Military Tribunals in September **1947** former SS General Otto Ohlendorf told presiding Judge Michael Musmanno that in the killing campaigns, “There was no difference between Gypsies and Jews.” As late as this date, Romani survivors from the camps were afraid to show themselves publicly because pre-Nazi laws were still in effect which would have put them back into detention centers if they were unable to show documentation proving German birth.

Despite the overwhelming documentary evidence to the contrary, in **1951** the Württemberg Ministry of the Interior issued a statement that judges hearing restitution claims should bear in mind that “Gypsies were persecuted under the National Socialist regime not for any racial reason, but because of an asocial and criminal record.” Members of the shattered postwar remnants of the surviving Romani population lacked the wherewithal legally to challenge this statement, and no outside agency came forward to take up the Romani case.

A report was issued by the German Ministry of Finance in **1986** which concluded that “all those victimized by Nazism have been adequately compensated . . . the circle of those deserving compensation need not be extended any further.” Two years later, in February, the East German government announced its resolution to pay \$100 million in war crimes reparations to Jewish survivors, but refused to pay anything to Romani survivors. Finally, on April 12 **1990**, the East German Government released a statement apologizing for the “immeasurable sorrow” the National Socialist regime had inflicted upon its victims, including Romanies, but “while the world celebrates the changes in Eastern Europe, the traditional Gypsy role of scapegoat is already being resurrected in countries like Romania and Hungary . . . Collective rights for minorities such as . . . Gypsies remains as elusive as ever.”

Romani Language Terminology

<i>Holocaust:</i>	O Baro Porrajmos
<i>Genocide:</i>	Samudaripe
<i>Nazis:</i>	Nacoci (Nacjonalne Socjalisturja)
<i>Victims:</i>	Dukhadile
<i>Jews:</i>	Židovurja; Bibolde
<i>Germans:</i>	Njamcurja
<i>Final Solution of the Gypsy Question:</i>	O Agoruno Impačimos le Rromane Pučhimaske
<i>Final Solution of the Jewish Question:</i>	O Agoruno Impačimos le Židovickone Pučhimaske
<i>Survivors:</i>	E inkalde
<i>Gas chambers:</i>	Sobi gasoske
<i>Ovens:</i>	Bova
<i>Gypsy Night, “Zigeunernacht”:</i>	E Rjat le Rromane Phabimatangi
<i>Kristallnacht:</i>	E Rjat la Phagerdja Vojagake
<i>Gypsy Clean-Up Week:</i>	O Kurko e Šulavimaske le Rromenge
<i>Liberator:</i>	Skepisari
<i>Bystander:</i>	Lojari
<i>Upstander:</i>	Ažutari

Notes

¹Recognition of this has been a long time coming. Luebke wrote that “[n]o comprehensive ‘Gypsy Law’ was ever promulgated” (David Luebke, *The Nazi Persecution of Sinti and Ròma*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Research Brief, 18 April 1990, 3), and Breitman that “[w]hatever its weaknesses, ‘Final Solution’ at least applies to a single, specific group defined by descent. The Nazis are not known to have spoken of the Final Solution of the Polish problem or of the gypsy (*sic*) problem” (Richard Breitman, *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution*. Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 1991, 20). The fact that the concept of “race” has no scientific basis is irrelevant here, since Nazi ideology fabricated its own “racial” identities for Jews and Romanies and acted upon them. If we add the third group selected for elimination, the mentally and physically handicapped, then the “gene-pool pollutant” factor becomes all the more clear. One might consider too that male homosexuality was also documented by the Nazis as a “racially destructive phenomenon,” a further weakening genetic element in the proposed Master Race.

²Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944).

³Called *O Baro Porrajmos* (“paw-rye-mawss”) “The Great Devouring” in the Romani language. The Romani people are commonly, but inaccurately, referred to as “Gypsies,” a label based on the false assumption that they had come into Europe from Egypt. The Romani population, numbering some 12 million throughout the world, consists of very many subgroups, including the Sinti, the Roma, the Kalé, the Bashalde, the Romanichals and so on. Originally from northwestern India, they left that region a millennium ago as a result of Islamic expansion, and entered Europe for the same reason some 250-300 years later.

⁴ Heinrich Grellmann, *Die Zigeuner* (Dessau and Leipzig, 1783).

⁵In Johann Erich Biester, “Ueber die Zigeuner,” *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 21, 1793. 108-165.

⁶Johann Fichte, *Versammlungen zum Deutschen Volk* (Leipzig, 1807-1808).

⁷Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, *Deutsches Volksthum* (Lübeck: Niemann & Co., 1810).

⁸Rainer Hehemann, *Die “Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens” im Wilhelminischen Deutschland und in der Weimarer Republik, 1871-1933* (Frankfurt am Main: Haag & Herschen Verlag, 1987). 99, 116, 127, and Wolfgang Wippermann, *Das Leben in Frankfurt zur NS-Zeit: Die nationalsozialistische Zigeunerverfolgung* (Frankfurt am Main: W. Kramer & Co., 1986), 57-58.

⁹Robert Knox, *The Races of Men* (London, 1850).

¹⁰Joseph Arthur Gobineau, *Essai sur l’Inégalité des Races Humaines* (Paris, 1855).

¹¹Richard Liebich, *Die Zigeuner in ihrem Wesen und ihre Sprache* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1863).

¹²Kulemann, in Joseph Tenenbaum, *Race and Reich* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1956), 9.

¹³Karola Fings & Frank Sparing, *Nur wenige Kamen zurück: Sinti und Roma im Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne: Stadt-Revue Verlag, 1990), 250.

¹⁴John P. Fox, “The Nazi extermination of the Gypsies: Genocide, Holocaust, or a ‘minor irritant’?,” paper presented at the conference of the Association of Genocide Scholars (Williamsburg, Virginia, June 14th - 16th. 1995), 7.

¹⁵Alfred Dillmann, *Zigeuner-Buch* (Munich: Wildsche, 1905).

¹⁶Karl Binding & Alfred Hoche, *Die Freigabe der Vernichtung lebensunwerten Lebens* (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1920).

¹⁷Dov Freiburg, “Testimony,” in Yad Vashem Archives, A-361.

¹⁸Hans Joachim Döring, *Die Zigeuner im Nationalsozialistischen Staat* (Hamburg: Kriminalistik Verlag, 1964), 37.

¹⁹ Robert Körber, *Rassesieg in Wien, der Grenzseite des Reiches* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumuller, 1939).

²⁰Emil Brandis, *Ehegesetze von 1935 erläutert* (Berlin, 1946), 37.

²¹*Reichsführer-SS-Dokument S-Kr. 1*, No. 557 (1938).

²²Romani Rose, 'Der Rauch hatten wir täglich vor Augen:' *Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma*. (Heidelberg: Wunderhorn, 1999), 347.

²³Miriam Novitch, *Le Génocide des Tziganes sous le Régime Nazi*, AMIF Publication No. 164 (Paris: La Comité pour l'Erection du Monument des Tziganes Assassinés à Auschwitz, 1968), 11.

²⁴Karl Hannemann, "Artfremde Gegenwart," *Bulletin of the German Association of National Socialist Physicians*, (August, 1938), 38.

²⁵Donald Kenrick. *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)*. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1998), 74-75.

²⁶Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (London: Heinemann, 1972), 76.

²⁷Kenrick and Puxon, *op. cit.*, 74.

²⁸Miriam Novitch, *op. cit.*, 9.

²⁹Johannes Behrendt, "Die Wahrheit über die Zigeuner", *NS-Partei Korrespondenz*, 10 (1939), No. 3.

³⁰*Nuremberg Trial documents*, Nos. NG 558 and PS-654.

³¹Emil Proester, *Vraždní čs. Cikánů v Buchenwaldu*. Document No. ÚV ČSPB-K-135 of the Archives of the Fighters Against Fascism, (Prague, 1940).

³²Romani Rose, *op. cit.*, 150.

³³Romani Rose, ed., *The National Socialist Genocide of the Sinti and Roma* (Heidelberg: Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2003), 172.

³⁴ Raul Hilberg, *Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 608.

³⁵Raul Hilberg, *op. cit.*, 602, 1275.

³⁶Dragoljub Acković, “Suffering of the Roma in Jasenovac,” in Barry Lituchy, ed., *Jasenovac and the Holocaust in Yugoslavia: Analyses and Survivors’ Testimonies* (New York: Jasenovac Research Institute, 2006), 53-62.

³⁷*Zentrale Stelle des Landesjustizverwaltungen*, 19 August 1961.

³⁸*Nuremberg Trial document* No. PS-682

³⁹ *Document No. 66558/42*, Central Office for Reich Security Dept. VI-D-7B, dated 14 August 1942. This contradicts the Yad Vashem rationale for excluding Romanies from the definition of “Holocaust,” viz. that Nazi policy against them was not extended globally.

⁴⁰Staatliche Kriminalpolizei *Memo No. K.130/43 (Z)*, dated 28 January 1943, Duisberg.

⁴¹Jerzy Ficowski, *Cyganie na Polskich Drogach* (Cracow: Wydawnicwo Literackie, 1965), 110.

⁴²Perry Broad, “KZ Auschwitz: Erinnerungen eines SS Mannes”. *Hefte von Auschwitz*, 9:7-48 (1966), p. 41.

⁴³*Die Auschwitz-Hefte: Texte der polnischen Zeitschrift "Przegląd lekarski" über historische, psychische und medizinische Aspekte des Lebens und Sterbens in Auschwitz* (Auschwitz: Panstwowe Muzeum, 1959), 54.

⁴⁴*National Archives and Records Administration*, Modern Military Branch, R&A Report No. 2445.

THE FINAL SOLUTION OF THE GYPSY QUESTION

O Agoruno Impaçimos le Rromane Pučhimaske

Ian Hancock
Texas State Holocaust and Genocide Commission
Former Member, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council
radoc@radoc.net

The Holocaust was the implementation of the genocidal action referred to as the Final Solution. Some Holocaust historians have denied that it included the Romani people: in his *The Architect of Genocide: Himmler and the Final Solution* (Hanover & London: University Press of New England 1991, 20) Richard Breitman wrote that “whatever its weaknesses, ‘Final Solution’ at least applies to a single, specific group defined by descent. The Nazis are not known to have spoken of the Final Solution of the Polish problem or of the gypsy [sic] problem.” Guenther Lewy in his *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* not only claimed that Romanies were not a part of the Holocaust, but that they were not even the victims of genocide.

When countries are at war, certain individuals and organizations in those countries become singled out as being potentially harmful to the national interest and are dealt with in different ways, usually by detention or by expulsion. In Germany during the Second World War many groups were thus identified: Communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, trades union representatives and others, but only two populations identified by what they were born were targeted for eradication: the Jews and the Romanies (“Gypsies”). Policies aimed at these two peoples predate the Second World War, beginning in the year that Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, and when the plans for the Holocaust were laid: “In 1933 a process began which was to pursue the racial differentiation of people into Aryans and non-Aryans. The intended goal was the final annihilation of all Jews and Gypsies in Europe.”¹ The overarching label for this intent was the *Final Solution*.

Although the word *Holocaust* is sometimes generalized to include all groups targeted by the National Socialists between 1933 and 1945, it should strictly only refer to the implementation of this policy: the genocide of the Jews and the Romanies. Though not a ‘racial’ group nor one defined by religion, the handicapped too were singled out and destroyed for the same reason: they were seen to constitute a genetic contaminant in the creation of Hitler’s envisioned *Herrenvolk*, his ‘Master Race.’²

The term *final solution* has also had different applications at different times and in different places. The words “The final solution of the Gypsy problem” (in the Romani language *o Agoruno Impaçimos le Rromane Pučhimaske*) can be found as early as 1888 on the first page of the first issue of *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, though the “problem” referred to there was for scholars to determine the origins of the Romani people and language. And an early reference to “the final solution of the Jewish question” found in a Nazi party document from 1931 concerned the possible use of Jews as forced labor to drain areas of swampland.³ For Romanies, a Nazi document addressing the creation of a “Gypsy law” (*Reichzigeunergesetz*) referred to “the introduction of the *total solution of the Gypsy problem* on either a national or an international level,” a solution then still to be determined. It was drafted under the direction of State Secretary Hans Pfundtner of the Reichs Ministry of the Interior on March 4 1936⁴. For Jews and Romanies, the various proposed “solutions” for dealing with each differed over time—in 1937 one SS memo recommended the mass drowning of Romanies by towing them out to sea and sinking the boats—but for both peoples the solution moved inexorably toward a single goal—complete physical elimination.

In his 1938 address to The German Association for Racial Research, Dr. Adolph Würth of the Racial Hygiene Research Unit said “the Gypsy question is a racial question for us today. In the same way that the National Socialist state has solved the Jewish question, it will also have to settle the Gypsy question once and for all. The race biological research on Gypsies is an unconditional prerequisite for *the Final Solution of the Gypsy Question*.”⁵

In March the same year a letter to the “Imperial Leader of the SS” from Dr. Werner Best, Head of the Nazi Security Police, addressed the “initiat[ion of the] *Final Solution to the Gypsy problem* from a racial point of view.”⁶ The first official publicly-posted Party statement to refer to the Final Solution of the Gypsy Question (*die endgültige Lösung der Zigeunerfrage*) was issued at that time signed by Himmler, who also ordered the Bureau of Romani Affairs to be moved from Munich to Berlin.⁷

In his post-war memoirs, SS Officer Perry Broad of the political division at Auschwitz wrote that “it was the will of the all-powerful Führer to have the Gypsies disappear from the face of the earth” (“*es war der Wille des allmächtigen Reichsführers, alle Zigeuner von der Erde verschwinden zu lassen*”), and that “the Central Office knew it was Hitler’s aim to wipe out all the Gypsies without exception” (“*das Zentralbüro wusste, dass es Hitlers Ziel war, alle Zigeuner ohne Ausnahme auszulöschen*”).⁸

“The final resolution, as formulated by Himmler, in his ‘Decree for Basic Regulations to Resolve the Gypsy Question as Required by the Nature of Race,’ of December 8th, 1938, meant that preparations were to begin for the *complete extermination* of the Sinti and Roma”⁹ (emphasis added). In 1939 Johannes Behrendt of the Office of Racial Hygiene issued a brief stating that “[a]ll Romanies should be treated as hereditarily sick; the only solution is elimination. The aim should therefore be the elimination without hesitation of this defective element in the population.”¹⁰

A conference on racial policy and to decide, inter alia, upon the Final Solution of the Gypsy Question, was held in Berlin on 21 September 1939 and organized by Reinhard Heydrich, who was Head of the Reich Main Security Office and the leading organizational architect of the Nazis’ Final Solution of the Jewish Question. Four issues were decided: the concentration of Jews in towns, their relocation to Poland, the removal of 30,000 Romanies to Poland, and the systematic deportation of Jews to German-incorporated territories using goods trains. An express letter sent by the Reich Main Security Office on 17th October 1939 to its local agents mentioned that the ‘Gypsy Question will shortly be regulated throughout the territory of the Reich.’ At about this time, Adolf Eichmann made the recommendation that the ‘Gypsy Question’ be solved *simultaneously* with the ‘Jewish Question.’¹¹

On January 24 1940 a memorandum from Leonardo Conti, Secretary of State for Health in the Ministry of the Interior, which was sent simultaneously to the Main Office of the Security Police, to the Kripo headquarters, and to the Reich Health Department in Berlin, read:

“It is known that the lives of Romanies and part Romanies are to be regulated by a Gypsy law (*Zigeunergesetz*) . . . I firmly believe, now as before, that *the final solution of the Gypsy problem* can only be achieved through the sterilization of full and part Romanies.”

On July 31 1941 Heydrich also included the Romanies in his ‘final solution’ shortly after the German invasion of the USSR, ordering the Einsatzkommandos “to kill all Jews, Romanies and mental patients.”¹² Complying with this, the senior SS officer and Chief of Police for the East, Dr. Alfred Landgraf, informed the Reich Commissioner for the East, Hinrich Lohse, of this inclusion of the Romanies in the ‘final solution,’ and on December 24 1941 issued the order that the Romanies “should be given the same treatment as the Jews.”¹³

Himmler signed the order dispatching Germany’s Sinti and Roma to Auschwitz on December 16 1942. The ‘Final Solution’ of the ‘Gypsy Question’ had begun.¹⁴ Thurner adds:

Heinrich Himmler’s infamous Auschwitz decree of December 16th, 1942 can be seen as the final stage of the final solution of the Gypsy Question. The decree served as the basis for their complete extermination. According to the implementation instructions of 1943, *all* Romanies, irrespective of their racial mix, were to be assigned to concentration camps. The concentration camp for Gypsy families at Auschwitz-Birkenau was foreseen as their final destination . . . opposed to the fact that the decision to seek a final solution for the Gypsy Question came at a later date than that of the Jewish Question, the first steps taken to exterminate the Romanies were initiated *prior* to this policy decision; the first gassing operations against Romanies did indeed take place in Chelmno as early as late 1941/early 1942.¹⁵

The term has emerged since. In August 2008, in an attempt to succeed with its radical anti-Romani rhetoric in the upcoming 2010 general elections, the Czech National Party released details of its proposed “Final Solution to the Gypsy Question in the Czech Lands.” In a 150-page study it claimed that it did not want to *kill* the Romanies, but instead buy land in India and to relocate them there.¹⁶

1
Herbert Heuss, 1997. *From ‘Race Science’ to the Camps: The Gypsies During the Second World War*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 27.

2
Ian Hancock, 2011. “The neglected memory of the Romanies in the Holocaust/Porrajmos,” in Jonathan C. Friedman, ed., *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, London & New York, 375-384.

3
Ronald Rosenbaum, 1998. *Explaining Hitler: The Search for the Origins of His Evil*. New York: Harper Books, 15.

4
Donald Kenrick & Grattan Puxon, 2009. *Gypsies Under the Swastika* and Herbert Heuss, Frank Sparing, Karola Fings and Henriette Asséo, 1997. *From Race Science to the Camps*. Both Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press.

5
Reichsführer-SS-Dokument S-Kr. 1, No. 557 (1938).

6
Romani Rose, ‘*Der Rauch hatten wir täglich vor Augen: Der nationalsozialistische Völkermord an den Sinti und Roma*. (Heidelberg: Wunderhorn, 1999), 347.

7
NS-Rechtspiegel, 21 February 1939.

8
Perry Broad, 1966. “KZ Auschwitz: Erinnerungen eines SS Mannes”. *Hefte von Auschwitz*, 9:7-48, 41.

9
The Auschwitz *Memorial Book*, State Museum, 1993, *xiv*.

10
Johannes Behrendt, 1939. “Die Wahrheit über die Zigeuner”, *NS-Partei Korrespondenz*, 10, No. 3.

11
Michael Burleigh & Wolfgang Wippermann, 1991. *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945*. Cambridge: The University Press.

12
Benno Müller-Hill, 1988. *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Romanies and Others, 1933-1945*. Oxford: The University Press, 58-59. See also Henry Friedlander, “Die Vernichtung der Behinderten, der Juden und der Sinti und Roma,” in Edgar Bamberger & Annegret Ehmman, (eds.). *Kinder und Jugendlicher als Opfer des Holocaust*. Heidelberg: Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma. 1995, 15-28.

13
Müller-Hill, *loc. cit.*

14
Michael Burleigh & Wolfgang Wippermann, 1991, *loc. cit.*

15
Erika Thurner, 1987. “Nazi policy against the Romanies.” Paper delivered at the United States Holocaust Memorial Council’s *Conference on Other Victims* held in Washington, in March that year.

16
Romea.cz News Agency, *Bulletin*, August 8 2002.