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Gabrielle Tyrnauer enriched Gypsy research by contributing a 576 citation bibliography dealing with Gypsies and the Holocaust. She also provided an introductory essay concerning this subject for the benefit of lay readers and experts. As she indicates, a number of obstacles stood in the way of her completing this valuable work. Not the least of these was the lack of financial support as was the lack of recognition of a Gypsy Holocaust. Together these are indicative of the state of Gypsy studies in general.

The general disinterest in Gypsies by the American academy is a constant barrier to such scholarship. Holocaust scholars have not been convinced of the equal suffering of Gypsies as Jews during the era of National Socialism.

The extent to which the Nazis nearly succeeded in totally wiping out the European Gypsies, between 1942-1945, is not commonly known, much less appreciated as an experience of genocidal proportions. The struggle to bring the Gypsy Holocaust to light is to Dr. Tyrnauer's credit. Moreover, she has done this in a tradition of research that other anthropologists would do well to follow. Her work serves the interests of those of whom she writes. Particularly, she has assisted the leadership of the international Romani Union, the intelligentsia of the international Gypsy movement, and those individuals who struggle against discrimination and for human rights by giving their movement a voice in scholarly and public debates.

Dr. Tyrnauer's essay provides even the uninitiated reader with a coherent historical picture of Gypsies in West Europe, particularly Germany, and unavoidably draws on the Jewish Holocaust as a counter--and reference point. Her contribution fills some of the gaps in the knowledge regarding the continuous European presence of a people of North Indian descent, who still speak a Sanskrit-based language called Romanes. This group of people has worked out

a means of existence within the bosom of Western Civilization since the twelfth century, the earliest documented mention of Gypsies in Greece.

The poverty of understanding regarding Gypsies, even in regions where they appear in large numbers, helps subject this population to discrimination of the most virulent kind. Furthermore, the general disregard of Gypsies as a legitimate social group demanding the kind of consideration obtained by other groups continues to be a barrier to their proper study. Although scholarship in the last 10 years has at last focused on the suppression of Gypsies, Tyrnauer suggests much work still considers Gypsies as an exotic, useless intrusion in European societies, rather than an integral and productive part. The refusal to acknowledge Gypsy upward mobility in the context of dominant society has also prevented research of class differences within Gypsy groups and created a sense of marginalized homogeneity that does not reflect reality. It is rather surprising that anthropology has not recognized the theoretical significance of the Gypsies ("very much like the Jews," as Mort Fried once pointed out to me), a population that has systematically and quite successfully mounted counter-hegemonic (in a Gramscian sense) resistance to local, regional, national and international governments and modes of production that has spanned feudalism, capitalism and socialism.

Education in their own language, media representations of themselves as they choose to be perceived, and civil rights accorded them as any ethnic minority in pluralized states, remain distant possibilities in most countries where they make up sizable population numbers in local administrative units. Yugoslavia seems to be an exception and model for the development of policies and opportunities for Roma ethnic expression, a consequence very much also of the leadership provided by Gypsies in that country. Radio programs, cultural centers and Roma language publications are available in a number of the republics.

When they have not been studied as a romantic alternative to civilized life, they have been studied as a marginalized and self-marginalizing population with only a tangential role in the larger arena of economic and political life. Such studies, moreover, have reinforced the popular stereotype of Gypsies, i.e. that "true" Gypsies are only those who are marginalized and who maintain a more or less precise trait list of traditions. Such orthodoxy would prevent most members of most ethnic groups to claim membership in their respective groups.

Tyrnauer, perhaps too uncritically, accepts the Holocaust, concocted and implemented by National Socialism, as a unique mode of production which had created an incomparable

experience of genocide, one that was specific to the experiences of Jews and Gypsies alone. This is so, she explains, because the Holocaust was based on the accepted notion of the biological inferiority of these two groups of people seen by a "master race" to be basically flawed and a barrier to the flowering of human existence. Certainly, the experience is unique-thankfully so-but not so uncommon to make this historical instance serve as the only instance of such horror capable of human inhumanity to large numbers of people. The causes of the wholesale slaughter of entire population groups is poorly understood and reference to discrimination and scapegoating, or the political economic position of specific groups within society is circular and fails to explain why and how discrimination, scapegoating, or political economic-based hierarchies develop in the first place.

Tyrnauer is right to focus on an historical analysis of this period and on the forces and conditions shaping the events in which hundreds of thousands (one half million to one million according to some experts) of Gypsies lost their lives. The Gypsy Holocaust, Dr. Tyrnauer makes clear, is a history of the silenced. The poignancy of this notion is not metaphoric, as is made clear by an autobiography written by a Viennese Gypsy, Ceija Stojka (1989 [1988]). Ms. Stojka experienced and survived Bergen-Belsen, Birkenau, Ravensbruck, and Auschwitz. While in the Ravensbruck Women's Concentration Camp, an ailing woman from her barracks, whom she had come to know as "aunty," was sentenced to a severe form of punishment. She had been at the wrong place at the wrong time--in the way of an SS Officer. She was forced to stand up to her neck in ice cold water during a cold winter day. She never returned to the barracks, Ceija Stojka recounted.

Even emotions had to be stilled. Ms. Stojka reflected on the impact that the death of a fellow inmate had on them. "All the women in our barracks were even more afraid now that they knew what can happen to them. Aunty Ria told us: 'You must not show your anger; the SS Women [officers in charge of the camp were women] will be even more glad to see this' (1989: 48-49). In another instance of horror, after two women prisoners attempted to escape they were captured, returned to camp and summarily executed. Ceija Stojka comments: "We knew then what will happen to us should we try to escape, we had already decided; we had not the littlest of hope" (ibid: 54). Even hope was silenced.

Of course, the silencing took on entirely different proportions as well. Ceija Stojka tells us that after her mother was threatened with the same ice water punishment, which caused almost

certain death, they took the first opportunity to leave the camp. This, however, was like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. They went to the Bergen-Belsen camp and here Ms. Stojka relates: "It was no longer cold; one could already see the grass growing on the camp's grounds. People from other camps were constantly coming and everyday half of them died. In the camp there were already two large piles of the dead. The dead grew constantly; one couldn't count them anymore" (ibid; 58-59).

The conditions that created the Holocaust were not only created by the state and those who represented it. While official discriminatory behavior and laws provided a model for society as a whole and created the possibility for public displays of hate, popular prejudice permitted the horror to emerge without a vigorous enough critical opposition to question the justice of such social conditions. According to Tyrnauer, "...there was little evidence of resistance in any country to measures against them (xvi)." Under these conditions, the invisible Gypsy became visible only as social problems appeared.

The history of Gypsies is a history of the silenced--a condition we must not and cannot forget. The silence and the silencing is multiple. First, it is a silence related to a people without a written history of their own. Second, it is a silence created from conditions of suppression and marginalization. Finally, the Holocaust for the Gypsies was a silencing of a most radical type, the eradication of a people. Not only was this act the taking away of physical life, but also their human regeneration. It meant the extermination of their possibilities. It meant to rob them of their future and their past--as if they had never existed. They were to have been erased totally and irrevocably.

An Austrian researcher, Claudia Mayerhofer, noted that Burgenland-Roma were ashamed to be Gypsies and believed their salvation lay in upward mobility and abstaining from the use of their language. One little girl told her that she would gladly give up her language for the sum of 5,000 Austrian Schillings. The children who moved to Vienna, Mayerhofer indicated, for the most part no longer know that their parents are Gypsies and the Romani language is totally foreign to them (1987:58). The process of silencing here, sadly, is almost complete.

Researchers continue to assist in the process of silencing. A recent collection of Russian Gypsy tales, translated from the Russian into English, sympathetically approaches Gypsy folklore (1986 Druts and Gessler). Yet, in the introduction to the book written by James Riordan, a folklorist, he states: "in folk tales too, as in their faith, they took the external forms of customs

and beliefs of their adopted land; they have no body of historical legends, no national heroes of their own." in the same breath, Mr. Riordan continues and indicates: "What Rom tales do contain is a lingering custom handed down from times gone by, the dimly recalled story of exile and persecution, of their homelands and wanderings abroad, of scraping a living, and the often unconscious adaptation of the folk tales of other peoples to their storytelling." The denial of Gypsy history runs deep. It is erroneous to state that all Gypsies have no sense of history or one that is based only on folklore. While the collection is valuable in that the book documents some of the lore of Russian Gypsies, the authors feed the clichéd conceptualization of Gypsies.

Thus Tyrnauer is right again to focus on the history of whom others assert as a people without history. Gypsies, like many indigenous populations of the world, did not become literate until relatively recently with the development of a national self-consciousness. The participants in the establishment of the International Romani Union provided that leadership. Their history like those of conquered and oppressed indigenous people the world over has had to be reconstructed from documents and archival materials normally generated by members of dominant society, through testaments of oral histories, or ethnographic research. The year 1989 has been momentous for all of Europe, East and West. The reformation of states is occurring at a revolutionary pace. New regional identities are in the making as the notion of Mitteleuropa is being recirculated, the unification of the Germanies may (has) become a reality, and new market-based economic alliances are constructed in which an international division of labor is formalized at levels that transcend the Gastarbeitgr phenomenon of the past decades. This is also a new opportunity to restructure the relationship among ethnic groups, particularly between ethnic minorities and states or state-like structures.

As Dr. Tyrnauer put it, Gypsies under conditions of feudalism had a "clear niche in society", one in which "their existence was not called into question (x)." As the bourgeois nation-state emerged, the "central focus on national identity, the 'Zigeunerfrage' was born... (xi)." The Gypsies became the inner enemy to the state and in the final analysis socially and physically isolated from the rest of society. in a post-modern era, Gypsies may find themselves equals among a wide range of ethnic groups competing for resources in an international community. In order for this to occur, the states in which they reside will need to recognize the Roma as a legitimate people having rightful and honorable places in society, with a history and a future.

Notes

The translations from German are my own.

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