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Nationalities Papers

CONTENTS

interested in Carpatho-Russia, *viz.,* the Soviet Union, has definitely settled the matter. We have an agreement with the Soviet Union that the question of Carpatho-Russia can be solved only in the framework of the pre-Munich boundaries, that is, that Carpatho-Russia will again be in the Czechoslovak Republic." See *Czechoslovak Sources and Documents*, No. 4, p. 66; and *The United Nations Review*, Vol. III, No. 8, 15 August 1943, p. 320.

Beneš continued to hold that position even after his meeting with Stalin in December 1943. See his comments about this matter in *Soviet War News*, No. 747, 24 December 1943, p. 2; and his report to the Czechoslovak State Council on 3 February 1944, as reproduced in *The United Nations Review*, Supplement No. 4, 31 October 1944, pp. 68–69.

When, in the fall of 1944, he received first-hand reports from František Nemec and his staff (whom he had dispatched to Carpatho-Ukraine to reestablish Czechoslovak administration) about Soviet designs on and tactics in the region; Beneš accused the leadership of the Ukrainian SSR of responsibility for the problem. That charge had no substance because, during Stalin's rule, neither Ukraine nor any other union republic commanded such authority. Beneš' efforts to clarify the problem with Stalin went unanswered. For an account of the immediate impact of these events on Beneš, see Taborský, "Beneš and the Soviets."

Finally, it is interesting to note that, in their public pronouncements, neither Beneš nor any of his top associates, before, during or after World War II, used the term "Carpatho-Ukraine." They always used either "Ruthenia," "Subcarpathian Russia," "Carpathian Russia," or "Subcarpathian Ruthenia." Many inhabitants of the region, but, above all, Carpatho-Ukrainian members of the "Vychodna armada," considered such references pejorative.

26. For the complete text of this treaty, see *New York Times*, 30 June 1945; and *The United Nations Review*, Supplement No. 6, 15 October 1945, pp. 174–175. It should be noted that when in 1947 the Czechoslovak government accepted the Marshall Plan, Stalin, who viewed the Plan as an American conspiracy against the Soviet Union, requested that a Czechoslovak delegation come to Moscow to explain its decision. The leader of the delegation was Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia Jan Masaryk, who, upon his return from Moscow to Prague, said publicly at the airport: "I went to Moscow as a free man but am returning home as a common sheepherder." Under obvious Soviet pressure, Czechoslovak authorities informed the U.S. State Department that they had changed their mind and were no longer interested in the Marshall Plan. A few months later Masaryk was found dead. All evidence points to murder.

It should also be remembered that Masaryk was not the only victim of the Moscow-masterminded sovietization of Czechoslovakia. By mid-1948 Beneš became its victim, and thereafter Gottwald and his Moscow-trained associates arrested hundreds of veteran officers of the "Vychodna armada" for alleged treason. Their "treason" was that, having spent time in Soviet concentration camps, they knew too much about the real nature of the Soviet system, which neither Stalin nor Gottwald wanted the rest of the Czechoslovak population to know. Using well-tested Soviet methods of control, Czechoslovak authorities executed some veteran officers, sent many others to work and perish in the uranium mines in the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia, and allowed only a few (assigned to work in coal mines and in forest camps) to survive.

After the fall of the Communist system (between 1989 and 1991) not only in Czechoslovakia but in all countries of Eastern Europe and in the USSR, innocent victims of the Communist reign of terror (regardless of whether they were living or dead—and many in both categories were personal, combat-sharing friends of this author) were rehabilitated. (There is no way to ascertain how any victim of this terror would feel about his posthumous rehabilitation!) In short, along with all other East European countries and all former union republics of the USSR, Czechoslovakia paid a very heavy price (in human and material assets) for the Moscow-masterminded and controlled sovietization experiment.

IDENTITY BUILDING AND THE HOLOCAUST: ROMA POLITICAL NATIONALISM

Slawomir Kapralski

It is significant that, at a time in which violent nationalisms are re-entering the European political stage, one of the basic aims of Romani elites in the area of human rights is to be recognized as a nation, a fact marked symbolically by the attention being paid to national emblems.[1] Of course, other issues (equal civil rights, minority rights, political representation or community development) are also among the objectives of Roma organizations (PER Report, 1992, p. 7). However, in the case of these latter issues, the question can be asked, to whom are these basic human rights to be granted? In other words, Romani elites seem to realize that the most important right for which they should strive is the right to have a commonly accepted and externally recognized self-definition as a group which should be granted consequent rights. In the present circumstances, especially in Eastern Europe, there is little doubt that the elected self-identification by the Romani people will be a national one, since this is perceived as stronger and more respectable than other identity-constructs such as ethnic minority.

Indeed, if one accepts Ian Hancock's definition of nation as "a non-politically autonomous ethnic group," (no matter what its size and whether or not it has its own territory) and if one follows his description of nationalism as "a sense of identity as a people, and the efforts resulting to foster this and to obtain recognition as a distinct population, bound by common historical, cultural, linguistic, political, religious, or other ties in the eyes of the larger society," then one would have to accept that the idea of a Romani nation, advocated by the International Romani Union, and the activities of its leaders, fall exactly into these categories (Hancock, 1991b, p. 133). In other words, using the expression of Nicolae Gheorghe (Gheorghe, 1991, p. 831), one can say that Romanies have in recent years become both the subject and object of the process of *ethnogenesis*: a conscious attempt toward achieving the accepted status of a non-territorial, ethnic-national group.[2]

Roma Ethnogenesis

One can list three groups of factors facilitating the process of ethnogenesis. First, there is the effort to counteract persisting external attempts to define Romanies in ways which would deny the Roma an ethnic or cultural identity. Second, there are recent developments in Eastern/Central Europe, in particular the breakdown of anti-Romani Communist policies which terminated with the collapse of Communism

and the revival of national identity-building processes in the countries of the region. And third, there has appeared the rejuvenation of the tradition of Romani nationalism.

The evolution of external definitions of the Roma can be presented as a conceptual development from a "social caste," through an "inferior race," to a "social problem." As a caste, the Roma were defined in social terms and were placed in the framework of relations with other groups as "a separate collectivity that inherited an imposed position of inferiority" (PER Report, 1992, p. 12). Later, this caste-like status was re-defined in terms of racist theory justifying the actual slavery in many countries of which Romanies were subjected to because of their allegedly inferior racial characteristics. However, the racial definition was semantically compounded with the social one: first, because it "legitimized" the Romanies' social status; and second, because the racial attributes merged with the social ones in a way which resulted in a social rather than a racist/ethnic external identification. The same confusion of social and racial characteristics could be found in Nazi ideology and praxis. On the one hand, Romanies were described in racist terms as a people of "alien blood," but also, on the other hand, as a social category, as "asocials" or "parasites."

In the post-war realities of Communist Eastern/Central Europe, Romanies were officially defined as a social population, and not as an ethnic group, a definition which corresponded with the assimilationist policies of different governments in the region. In Czechoslovakia, for instance, "the Roma were labelled a social group, with a dying ethnic identity, [with] no culture of their own and [a] language bordering on slang; therefore, they had no right to a distinct ethnic existence" (PER Report, 1992, p. 12). In Poland, the situation differed only slightly: according to Andrzej Mirga, until 1989 "the Roma were recognized as people of Gypsy origin, but the Gypsies were considered an 'ethnographic category' rather than an ethnic group" (PER Report, 1992, p. 12).

One may list two main groups of forces promoting the "social" definition of Romanies. First, such a definition provided governments with a convenient excuse for not granting the Roma those rights that are usually attributed to ethnic groups and for refusing to assume the responsibilities of "host" societies (PER Report, 1992, p. 13).[3] Second, the definition in social categories served as a legitimization of anti-Romani state policies. The Roma were defined as a social group not because governmental experts believed them to have any special kind of "social identity," but because they were targeted as a "social problem," a "pathology" with which state institutions had to deal. Such an approach implied that, in the best scenario, any existing ethnic and cultural differences of a targeted group were merely neglected, and, in the worst case, transformed into social deviants which should be eliminated (PER Report, 1992, p. 13).

The second factor of the process of ethnogenesis is connected with the recent economic and political transitions in Eastern/Central Europe. The collapse of Communism put an end to programmatic governmental efforts to destroy the traditional

cultural patterns, social structure, ways of life, and economic infrastructure of Roma.[4] There is, however, little consolation in this fact, for the assimilationist policy employed by Communist governments turned out to be very efficient.

To some extent, the collapse of Communism has had a positive outcome in allowing Romanies to organize themselves and to find ways of expressing their interests. It has also increased the possibilities for self-definition: in Poland, for instance, according to Andrzej Mirga, the Roma, since 1989, have been recognized as an ethnic group, although not as a nationality group (PER Report, 1992, p. 12). In general, however, the transition towards democracy has influenced Romanies in a rather negative way. First, the transition period, with all the insecurities and difficulties connected with it, has resulted in a well-known scapegoat effect, with the Roma as an easy target to blame. Second, the manifestations, often violent, of popular anti-Roma sentiments can now be expressed freely without being counteracted by the state apparatus, a mechanism which one might call the decentralization of violence.

The growing wave of racism and, more generally speaking, intolerance in Eastern/Central Europe can be partly explained as a manifestation of tendencies which were always present but which were previously politically and ideologically suppressed. On the other hand, this growing wave forms a part of the peculiar Eastern/Central European version of nationalism. It has a particular emphasis on the idea of an ethnically homogeneous state and on nationality as based on "objective" criteria: i.e., a commonly shared culture, language, ethnicity, religion (Mommsen, 1990, pp. 213–214).

The importance of national identity in Eastern/Central Europe, in consideration of the longstanding struggles of Communist regimes (officially) to eradicate and/or (unofficially) appropriate its manifestations and symbols, affects the Roma in a twofold way. First, the notion of a homogenous national identity implies the threat that Romanies might be excluded from the ranks of co-nationals, which, in the case of post-Communist countries often means a kind of second-class citizenship. Second, it turns Roma elites towards the intrinsic tradition of Roma nationalism, a development which can be interpreted as the belief that, in the face of belligerent nationalisms, the national identification is the most secure and respectable form of group identity.

In the first place, Roma nationalism can be understood as deriving from the resources of Roma ethnicity and self-esteem, thus enhancing and "updating" patterns of identity already present among Romanies. The main objectives of this nationalist stream are the preservation of traditional lifestyles and support for the use of the Romani language in formal education. The second source of Roma nationalism is the ideology of the Christian missions associated with the International Evangelical Gypsy Mission, with their emphasis on human equality, literacy, and overcoming sub-ethnic boundaries. Finally, there are other nationalist traditions from which the Roma have borrowed: Zionism, the classical nationalism of the nineteenth century,

with its idea of the nation state and national self-determination, and the ideologies of different social/nationalist movements like Fanonism and Black Power. All are helping to reshape the idea of self-determination and advocating the concept of an autonomy "within someone else's power structure" (Acton, 1974, pp. 233–234).

As was stressed at the beginning, recognition for Roma national identity is one of the most important objectives of Romani elites. Therefore, the recourse to the inherent nationalist tradition, including the "institutional tradition" of past Romani attempts at organization, should be interpreted as an essential aspect of Roma ethnogenesis, animating different Romani movements and stimulating recent political activities of Romanies. However, one might doubt whether this tradition alone is enough to produce a sense of ethnic-national identity among the large Romani population. The differences existing between groups of Roma, and the restricted number of Romani activists and their relatively limited influence, all hamper the process of ethnogenesis and make the development of a unified Roma identity rather difficult. Besides, one has to take into account the general hostility of the environment in which Romani activities take place. Furthermore, there exist traditions, both internal and external, denying the Roma a distinct national identity, and hindering attempts towards the formation of such an identity. The next section examines how Roma elite drew upon this tradition of persecution resulting in today's politicization of the Roma ethnogenesis.

The Invention of Tradition and the Politicization of Ethnogenesis

The relation between tradition and identity among the Roma excellently illustrates the dialectics of identity and history as described by David Lowenthal (1985, pp. 41–46, 199). In his view, a commonly shared past creates a necessary component of identity among those who adhere to that past: the easiest answer to the question "Who are we?" seems to rely on some reference to "who we were." On the other hand, it is precisely the group's identity which makes that past real: the viable past is always someone's past; it is a historical image, filtrated through and sedimented in collective memory, proving useful for the identity-constructs existing at a given time among some group. Such a viable past, which one may call tradition, is of particular importance for those groups whose identities are threatened: "Identification with a national past," Lowenthal writes, "often serves as an assurance of worth against subjugation or bolsters a new sovereignty. Peoples deprived by conquest of their proper past strive hard to retrieve its validating comforts" (Lowenthal, 1985, p. 44). The same is definitely true not only in the case of a conquered nation but also in the case of marginalized peoples and, in general, in all those situations in which a group's identity has been denied, situations to which the Roma are particularly vulnerable.

The situation, however, becomes more complicated when there is no obvious tradition to which the threatened identity could refer, or when there are several

competing traditions. In such a case traditions have to be invented. "The element of invention is particularly clear," Eric Hobsbawm writes, where "the history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function it is to do so" (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 13).

Hobsbawm's concept of inventing traditions is particularly useful in the case of the Roma. Their identity, according to Andrzej Mirga and Lech Mroz (1994), was created in the framework of culture, not of history: it rested in manifestations of an atemporal value-pattern of *Romanipen*, "being a Rom" in the surrounding world of "others," and in maintaining "horizontal" kinship relations, ways of life, and patterns of interaction with non-Romanies (*gadze*). While national communities of Europe defined themselves with reference to their respective histories, "the need of history was alien to the Roma and appeared only recently due to the Roma elites ... attempting to create in a divided and sub-ethnically differentiated [Roma] population a sense of national community" (Mirga and Mroz, 1994, pp. 31–32).

Such an atemporal identity is by no means weaker than an identity based on the collective memory of a group's history. The persistence of Roma identity despite all the constraints, hostile environment, and deliberate attempts at its destruction is a well-known fact which proves that a viable identity can be achieved and perpetuated in a non-historical dimension (Hancock, 1991b, p. 137; Fraser, 1993, p. 44). However, it is not the kind of identity which could be easily transformed into a national one: the latter needs historical tradition, something which the former cannot provide. Therefore, efforts towards establishing a sense of national identity among Romanies would involve necessarily the invention of tradition. My argument demonstrates that it is the actual persecution experienced by the Roma that will create the foundation of such a tradition.

It goes without question that the history of Roma is to a great extent a history of persecution, marginalization, and discrimination. In the course of this history one can find, especially in recent years, such atrocious acts as the sterilization of Romani women and the removal of children from their families, instigated by the Communist government of Czechoslovakia; lynchings and program-like viloence, reported in Spain, Poland and Romania and, more recently, from Austria; and public statements by British officials that sound like genocidal appeals (Hancock, 1991a).[5]

Indeed, the historical record of the persecution experienced by the Roma is one of the most crucial aspects of the documentational activities undertaken by Roma elites (see for instance Hancock, 1987). The message included in this discourse is difficult to undermine by any opponents while, simultaneously, easily acceptable to different groups of Roma. It allows for the creation of a historical narrative describing events in a chronological way, contributing to the development of a historical consciousness. By showing the continuity of persecutions, the discourse can help explain the recent situation of Romanies in the context of long-term discrimination.

The use of this tradition, however, is dangerous. One has to agree with Jennifer Hohschild that, "while claims of victim status may be effective in getting something out of the dominant society and eliciting resources from the state through manipulation of guilt and social responsibility, there is a very real danger that the disadvantaged group may come to believe in them, to internalize victim status as an unchanging reality of life" (PER Report, 1992, p. 20). Besides, history as continuous suffering, despite its unquestionably unifying emotional aspect, would be actually a history employing the external frame of reference, that of the persecutors. Therefore, the tradition of persecution has to be combined with an another type of discourse that would make it a secure foundation of the identity-building process.

This second kind of discourse can be placed within the Roma nationalist tradition and is connected with efforts towards the preservation of traditional Roma culture, language, ways of life, and traditional economic activities. It is also aimed against assimilationist tendencies by enhancing in-group feelings. The exponents of this type of discourse must, however, bear in mind the large differentiation of Romani culture which makes any attempt at unification very difficult. It is also hard to develop such a cultural identity into a historical tradition because of its atemporal structure. One also has to mention a tendency among some groups of Roma to escape from any distinctive Romani identity. The German Sinti, for instance, are trying to obtain recognition as a German nationality group (*deutsche Volksgruppe*), which would provide them the status of an inherent part of German society. On the other hand, in Slovakia, only 6% of Roma students would like to be seen as having a different ethnic background than the dominant population (Gheorghe, 1991, p. 840; PER Report, 1992, p. 19).

This type of discourse contests a tradition which is related to the constant attempts to deny the Roma a distinct cultural identity. For example, Ian Hancock quotes a Czechoslovak assimilationist, a quote strongly saturated with Marxist vocabulary: "It is an utterly mistaken opinion that Gypsies form a nationality or a nation, that they have their own national culture, their own national language … It would be incorrect, and in the end reactionary, to act against the progressive decay of Gypsy ethnic unity. The way to achieve assimilation does not exclude force, which would tend to remove whatever differences exist" (Hancock, 1991b, p. 138). Opinions like this corresponded with official governmental policies and facilitated the process of turning the Roma into a "social problem." Therefore, the natural reaction against such policies and related discourses is to stress not only the ethnic distinctiveness of the Roma but also, in order to achieve a more secure and "respectable" identification that would prevent escapes from ethnicity, to promote the specific national identity of Roma: the idea of a non-territorial nation living among other national units.

However, in the particular political context of contemporary Eastern/Central Europe, this transnational identity based on ethnic distinctiveness might be seen as an unwelcome competition by rising local nationalisms. The latter, as was previously mentioned, utilize the conception of a homogeneous ethnic nation that promotes "the

sense of identity and rights especially for those who identify in terms of common culture and ancestry" (Gheorghe, 1991, p. 843). In such conditions, one can expect minimal space for the pluralistic co-existence of different ethnic groups living within a commonly accepted political unit. Hence, the ethnic-national tradition has not only to be invented but also, given the existing conflict with other traditions, to be formed in such a way to make it viable in the framework of East European nationalisms and, simultaneously, be efficient in securing Romani identification. This combination of imperatives, as well as the existing conflicts of traditions, results in the politicization of Roma ethnogenesis.

Nicolae Gheorghe, advocating the political rather than cultural character of Roma ethnogenesis, stresses the fact that Roma ethnicity should not be perceived as an independent variable. It is, in his opinion, a consequence of political actions taken to secure the existence of the Roma and to provide them with recognition. Of course, this process does not mean an abandonment of ethnic identity. It is rather conceived as an adherence to a different type of nationalism than the ethnic type dominant in Eastern/Central Europe. This new political nationalism means, first of all, political organization and participation in political life; and, it strives to create a common arena in which people of different ethnicities could co-operate in solving their problems, without allowing the differences between them to become the predominant issue which would exclude communication. In such a project, "culture moves to politics" (Gheorghe, 1991, p. 842): the most secure place for cultural difference seems to be the sphere of interaction between equal political agents in which political homogenization protects ethnic heterogeneity.

The politicization of ethnogenesis, therefore, implies a stress on the external activities of Romani organizations and movements supported by the previously discussed ideological currents of Romani nationalism. These organizations, not the ethnic constructions of identity, are becoming the foci of the Roma collective emancipation and political agents of the nation-building process (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972, pp. 210–214; Gheorghe, 1991, pp. 842–844).

An alliance with Roma political nationalism can neutralize the weak points of the tradition of persecution: the victim syndrome and the external non-Romani historical frame of reference. These can be counterbalanced by a focus on resistance and the internal historical perspective of the Romani movement. Further, the tradition of persecution brings into the nation-making process the element of unification as well as the emotional and moral dimension. Thus, the combination of political nationalism and the tradition of persecution can create an efficient rhetorical discourse which would be extremely difficult to undermine, and, at the same time, it has very good prospects as a viable popular discourse. Such a combination of traditions could also solve "Lowenthal's dilemma": the tradition of persecution creates a commonly shared past in which the Roma national identity can be rooted, while the nationalist tradition, by constructing national identity, secures the reality of that past as belonging to the Roma defined as a political unit.

However, one would need one more step to implement the national/persecution tradition as a popular discourse: to introduce this tradition into Roma collective memory and to make this memory living. Memory, as Fentress and Wickham rightly observe, is not only a representation, a network of ideas about the past. It is also an *action*: a communicative action of "speaking or writing about memories" and a commemorative action which means "the formal re-enaction of the past" (Fentress and Wickham, 1992, p. x). It is precisely this element of activity which turns an invented tradition into a popular discourse and makes individual remembrance a part of the collective memory of a group re-enacting its common past. In the final section of this essay, I discuss how this discourse is entering the collective memory of the Roma through the communicative and commemorative aspects of the memory of the Holocaust.

The Roma and the Holocaust

The growing number of Romani groups, mostly from Western Europe, visiting the site of the former Auschwitz concentration camp, may well indicate the growing symbolic importance of the fate of Romanies during World War II for Roma organizations and for individual Romanies. The third World Congress of the Roma, held in 1981 in Göttingen, was entirely devoted to the Romani *Poraimos*,[6] and in 1994 Romanies from all over the world gathered on the site of Auschwitz to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the extermination of the inmates of the so-called Gypsy camp (*Zigeunerlager*)—a part of Auschwitz II (Birkenau). It is also significant that the Roma Association in Poland chose as the location of its headquarters the town of Oswiecim, better known to the world under its German name—Auschwitz.

These events coincide with intellectual efforts to fill gaps in the historical record of the Roma persecutions and on the place of the Roma in the Nazi genocide. This task is of particular importance from the purely academic point of view, as, unlike the other victims, the situation of the Roma under the Nazi regime has been rather neglected in historical writings and has not received the proper attention of historians. Besides their academic function, the writings of Kenrick and Puxon (1972), Hancock (1987 and 1991a), Huttenbach (1991), and Tyrnauer (1991) form an important part of an attempt to draw the contour of the Roma collective memory as the historical representation of the tragic fate of Romanies. Poraimos is thus presented as the culmination of the persecutions the Roma have experienced since their arrival in Europe and as a condensation of different forms of discrimination to which they have been subjected. As such, Poraimos creates the linearity of Romani history, dividing it into periods "before" and "after," and gives this history meaning as a continuous unfolding of the persecution pattern.[7]

However, as mentioned before, memory as representation has to be accompanied by memory as commemoration: the action which re-enacts the past. Social memory,

as Paul Connerston has rightly observed, is of a performative nature; it has to be implemented by "bodily practices" and needs them further for its maintenance (see Kugelmass, 1993, p. 429). Therefore, the Romani presence in Auschwitz may be interpreted not only as a manifestation of their claim to their rightful place in the history of the Holocaust but also to participation in the symbolic meaning of Auschwitz. The Romani presence proclaims their suffering to the outside world; but, it is also a practice which transforms the disparate individual memories of survivors and their families into collective memory, revitalizes the past of the Holocaust in the present, and creates a historical tradition to which the Roma may adhere. The latter functions, which may be called internal, contribute to the consolidation of different Romani groups and support their collective identity.

At this point one may ask perhaps an obvious question: are there similarities between this attempt to use the memory of the Holocaust period as an identity-making factor and the recent attitudes of Jews, especially American Jews, towards the places in which the Holocaust was perpetrated? In a brilliant and provocative article, Jack Kugelmass describes the Jewish visitors at the sites of the extermination camps in Poland as passing through "a secular ritual that confirms who they are as Jews" (Kugelmass, 1993, p. 419). According to Kugelmass, the growing assimilation and secularization of the American Jews causes the need for new signs of group distinctiveness and group identity. Referring to Herbert Gans, Kugelmass writes "that the Holocaust has come to serve 'as a need for the threat of group destruction.' The need stems from increasing intermarriage, a decline in religious observance, and the fear that a lack of overt anti-Semitism has made the boundaries between Jew and non-Jew too permeable" (Kugelmass, 1993, p. 424). Another function of the ritual re-enactment of the Holocaust for the Jews is the symbolic reversing of reality: "By evoking the Holocaust dramaturgically, that is, by going to the site of the event and reconstituting the reality of the time and place; American Jews are not only invoking the spirits of the tribe, that is, laying claim to their martyrdom, but also making past time present. And in doing so they are symbolically reversing reality: they are transposing themselves from what they are currently perceived as—in the American case highly privileged, and in the Israeli case oppressive—and presenting themselves as the diametric opposite of privilege, as what they in fact were" (Kugelmass, 1993, p. 428).

One can say that the similarities between Jews and Roma are striking: in both cases an identity which is under threat, although in different ways, needs to be supported by activities which revitalize memory, unite people around the crucial values of their history, and constitute a principle legitimizing their actual or desirable situation. Given the change in the status of victimhood, resulting from the historical debate on the Holocaust, as well as the transformation of the Holocaust into "an asset" (Maier, 1988, p. 164), one may also expect that the Romanies would be willing to identify with the fate of the Jews, to present themselves as victims of the

same persecutions, and to participate in the symbolical rewards which this identification may bring.[8]

The Roma and the intellectuals who sympathize with their aspirations, stressing the common destiny of both groups, refer first of all to the same racist ideology which supported the Nazi persecutions. Kenrick and Puxon, for instance, have collected evidence from both Nazi official documents and books by Nazi racist anthropologists, according to which there was no particular difference in the racist definition of the Roma and the Jews: "In Europe, one of the quoted authors had written, generally only Jews and Gypsies are of foreign blood" (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972, p. 59). Another Nazi author had divided the population of Europe into the following categories: German and similar races (*stammesgleich*); foreign races (*stammesfremd*); Jewish and Gypsy; coloured (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972, p. 63). Henry Huttenbach has referred to another hierarchy, according to which the Germans occupied the top place, followed by "redeemable" nations (*lebenswertes Leben*), *e.g.*, Scandinavians, "expendable" nations (*lebensunwertes Leben*), *e.g.*, Slavs, who "were categorized as *Untermenschen* (sub-humans) and were, as such, candidates for eventual annihilation," the Gypsies, and, finally, the Jews, "who were perceived as an anti-race, a people outside the pale of humanity, whose extermination became a sacred cause of the party and the state through which it exercised its demonic power" (Huttenbach, 1991, p. 32). In this case, the Jews were selected as the most important target of Nazi racist policy, the Roma, however, were next to them.

Sometimes it is stressed that organized, methodical steps towards extermination were taken much earlier in the case of the Roma than in the case of the Jews (Hancock, 1989, p. 2021; Hancock, 1991a), and that the racist definition of the Roma was stricter than that of the Jews: according to the Nuremberg Law for the Protection of Blood and Honour, "if two of a person's sixteen great-great-grandparents were Gypsies he was classed as part-Gypsy and later, in 1943, could be sent to Auschwitz. Without going into details we may mention that a person with one Jewish grandparent (*four* great-great-grandparents) was not generally affected by Nazi anti-Jewish legislation" (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972, p. 67). This has led Ian Hancock to estimate that "if criteria for classifying who was Jewish had also applied to Gypsies, nearly 20,000 would have escaped being murdered" (Hancock, 1989, p. 2021).

The next point often made by intellectuals stressing the identity of the Jewish and the Romani fate is that the "roads to extinction" were in both cases basically the same: "Beginning with a definition of a target group by ideologues and 'racial scientists,' what followed was the identification of individuals who fit the definition, then their social—and finally physical—isolation from the surrounding population. Through this process, Jews and Gypsies were placed outside the law and deprived of the protection of the state" (Tyrnauer, 1991, p. xv). The steps which followed definition, identification and isolation, were, in the opinion of these scholars, exactly the same as those which, according to Raul Hilberg (1985, pp. 53–54), affected the Jews: expropriation (which, in the case of Romanies, was less important), concen-

tration (occasionally the Romanies were kept in the ghettoes together with the Jews), and, finally, annihilation either during the mobile killing operations or by deportations to the extermination camps.

Lastly, the percentage of the Romani victims is believed to be similar to that of the Jews. Ian Hancock (1989, p. 2020) quotes Simon Wiesenthal's estimation, according to which "Gypsies had been murdered in a proportion similar to the Jews, about 80% of them in the area of the countries which were occupied by the Nazis," and concludes that the general percentage of the Romani losses may be even higher than that of the Jews (p. 2024).

The reaction of the Jews expresses a whole variety of attitudes, ranging from the full acceptance of the idea of a Romani Holocaust, as in Wiesenthal's opinion, to an emphatic view that the Holocaust was a unique event which is an exclusive part of Jewish history, classifying the fate of other groups as merely selective genocide. The latter attitude seems to be dominant and can be illustrated by Robert Wistrich's view that the extermination of the Jews "finds ... no parallel with the persecutions of the other groups by the Nazis, [it] does not matter whether it happened to Russians, Serbs, Czechs, Sinti, Roma, homosexuals or political opponents" (Wistrich, 1992, p. 21).[9] Or, as Ralph Slovenko summarizes, "Jewish historians, educators and politicians tell and retell the difference between the destruction of the Jews in Europe and all other mass murders. As Elie Wiesel says, 'There were victims who were not Jews but *all* Jews were victims.' And as Rabbi Marvin Hier says, 'The Jewish tragedy during the Holocaust was unique'" (Slovenko, 1987, p. 665).

It is precisely the word "unique" which invokes angry reaction of Romani scholars, especially when its use is associated with actions denying the Roma participation in the international institutions and commemorative ceremonies: "I'd like to know," asks Ian Hancock, "why it took over seven years to get even *one* Romani representative to the [Holocaust Memorial] Council,[10] when the percentage of our losses was the same as, or perhaps even higher than that of the Jews; I would like to know why we have not been invited to participate in the annual Days of Remembrance; and I want to know why the Jewish tragedy was 'unique' when Romani victims experienced exactly the same fate, for exactly the same reasons, and the Romani people are still paying Hitler's price" (Hancock, 1989, p. 2024).

I am not going to analyze the problem of the "uniqueness" of the Jewish Holocaust and the applicability of that term to the tragedy of Romanies. After all, it does not seem to be an academic problem which can be dealt with by sociological analysis. The important fact is, however, that, in founding their identity on the history of the Holocaust, the Roma would have to compete with the powerful and already established tradition of Jewish identity. The recent reaction of Jewish organizations towards the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, during which the Polish organizers actually showed particular insensitivity to the Jewish memory, proves that any attempt to universalize the Holocaust and to include non-Jewish victims in its symbolical space will be contested. On the other

S. KAPRALSKI

hand, good working contacts established between the International Romani Union and several Jewish organizations, as well as the growing awareness and understanding of the Romani fate during World War II among individual Jews, may augur well for the future coexistence of both traditions.[11]

Conclusion

Legal and political attempts to get recognition as a nation have to be accompanied by actions on the social and cultural level. These actions will, on the one hand, legitimize these attempts, and, on the other hand, lay the foundations of national identity. If one accepts Benedict Anderson's idea of a nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 1991), one should stress that one of the most important points in the process of "imagining" is to construct a commonly shared tradition. The word "construction" does not mean here the forgery of historical artifacts. Construction means, rather, standardizing the symbolic meanings of events in the group's history; and the narrative of these events, as representing the particular logic or principle which had formed the group's past, has an influence on its present, and will determine its future.

This constructed vision of history (which, in a sense, is the history itself) performs different functions. It becomes a factor unifying the group's collective memory (or sometimes even creating it); thus, it supports the group's identity. The constructed vision, then, presents the group as having a history experienced collectively and which lives on in the group's collective memory; therefore, it distances the group from "people without history."

To perform these functions the group's history must be built upon certain historical events of great importance and of universal appeal. The main hypothesis here is that, in the case of the Roma nation-making process, such an event is the extermination of the Roma perpetrated by the Nazis during World War II. The coincidence of the ongoing nation-making process and the attempts to make the Romani Poraimos the crucial part of the Romanies' collective memory, enhancing their identity, does not seem to be accidental. In fact, the genocide was aimed against the Romanies as such, against all Romanies. The ancestors of today's Roma visitors to Auschwitz were murdered precisely because they were Romanies. The present-day generations unite as Romanies by building up a linkage with the past.

Although there seem to be similarities in the perception of the Holocaust by the Jews and the Romanies, the functions of that perception differ radically for the two groups. The Romanies do not need to stress their distinctiveness by referring to the Holocaust as the formative part of their history. They are distinctive enough despite all the attempts to assimilate them by force. What they need to stress is, first, their *kind* of distinctiveness, that is their distinctiveness as a particular nation among others, and second their right to be distinctive, which sometimes could be forcibly reduced to the problem of having a right to even exist. Further, the Romanies do not

need to reverse the reality symbolically: they *are* underprivileged and discriminated against just as their ancestors were. What they do need is symbolically to link their extermination during the Holocaust with the present persecution in order to de-legitimize contemporary forms of violence against them. By placing themselves on the side of the Jews, the Romanies could benefit from the widespread contempt of antisemitism and present themselves as victims of similar persecutions. In other words, the history-making function in the case of Romanies is oriented towards the future and has a pragmatic, political significance. Therefore, one cannot fully agree with Eric Hobsbawm when he presents tradition as opposed to pragmatism (Hobsbawm, 1983, p. 4). In the case of the Roma, the invented tradition, the tradition of persecution combined with political nationalism and re-enacted through the ritualized commemorative ceremonies, performs very pragmatic functions in the identity-building process.

NOTES

1. The adoption of the Romani anthem and the national flag was among the resolutions of the first World Romani Congress in 1971. The next Congress addressed a petition to all UNO member states to admit the Romanies "as a distinct nation and to treat them as a national minority possessing equal rights" (Bartosz, 1993, p. 15).
2. In fact, in Gheorghe's own words, the Romani objective is to acquire the status of "an acknowledged ethnic minority." However, taking into account the activities of the International Romani Union and explicit references to national identification made by authors like Ian Hancock, one may say that it is, rather, an ethnic-national status which is at stake and not merely that of an ethnic minority. Of course, different Romani communities may employ different articulations of their self-definition, depending on their traditions and the particular circumstances in which they live.
3. This was, however, by no means an exclusively Communist policy: in 1992 the German government refused to recognize the Roma as an ethnic minority in Germany.
4. A notable exception is the Czech Republic, where the state integrated an actively anti-Roma policy into its new citizenship law (Zoon, 1994; Beck, 1994). However, contrary to the Communist regime of Czechoslovakia with its attempt at forcible assimilation, the post-Communists government of the Czech Republic aims at excluding the Roma population from the legal construction of the new Republic's citizenship.
5. In 1990 the "British Conservative Councillor Tookey states in a public address that she wants to see 'the filthy, dirty Gypsies recycled and dumped in the sea,' following a similar public statement by the Mayor of Dartford in Kent that Gypsies should be 'pushed over the White Cliffs of Dover'" (Hancock, 1991a, p. 24).
6. Because of the controversy connected with the use of the word "Holocaust" in the case of non-Jewish victims, the controversy which creates a large part of the Jewish–Romani argument and which will be discussed later, I prefer at this stage to use the Romani word "Poraimos," meaning a "great devouring," to describe the fate of Roma during World War II. This is, I would like to stress, a technical decision, attempting to maintain academic objectivity; and it does not mean that I am taking any part in the controversy. I mention this because some Romani scholars and activists prefer not to use the word "Poraimos" and speak instead of the "Romani Holocaust." The word "Poraimos" is also not generally accepted among different Roma groups: Lovari and Kelderari use it while Polska Roma do not

(communication of Andrzej Mirga, chairman of the Roma Association in Poland, to the author).

7. This idea is clearly indicated by the title of Hancock, 1991a: *Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands. A Chronology Leading to the Holocaust and Beyond.*

8. The rewards of "passing as the Jews" can be not only of symbolical nature. Ian Hancock quotes a case of a German Romani musician who "changed his ... name ... to Rosenberg; with a Gypsy name, he had been out of work for months, but with a new Jewish name, he was highly employable. 'The German conscience is very selective,' he laughed" (Hancock, 1987, p. 78).

9. It is interesting that in this sentence no unified, collective identity of the Romanies is mentioned. This concurs, apparently, with the official terminology used by the German Romani organizations: the German Sinti do not accept the name Roma as applying to them; therefore all institutions in Germany, to which both Sinti and Roma belong, have in their names the expression *Deutsche Sinti und Roma*. However, despite all differences (Sinti's ancestors settled in Germany in the fifteenth century, whereas the word Roma is reserved for the descendants of nineteenth century Romani immigrants from Hungary), such a semantic convention, when used in the context of the Holocaust, neglects the fact that Sinti and Roma were exterminated *not* because they were, respectively, Sinti and Roma, but because they were Romanies.

10. In 1984, Seymour Siegel, the Council's director at that time, was quoted as saying that the Romani "efforts to obtain representation on it were 'cockamamie'" (Hancock, 1989, p. 2024). The first Romani representative to the Council was appointed in 1987.

11. This is, for instance, the opinion of Andrzej Mirga, chairman of the Roma Association in Poland, communicated to the author.

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