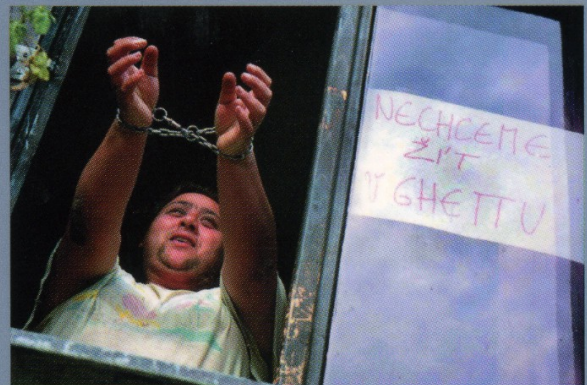


ROMA AND SINTI - HUMAN RIGHTS FOR EUROPE'S LARGEST MINORITY



**CENTRAL COUNCIL OF GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA
DOCUMENTATION AND CULTURAL CENTRE OF GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA**

ROMANI ROSE

ROMA AND SINTI – HUMAN RIGHTS
FOR EUROPE'S LARGEST MINORITY

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA
DOCUMENTATION AND CULTURAL CENTRE OF GERMAN SINTI AND ROMA

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Printed by: Neumann Druck, Heidelberg

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Sponsored by:
German Foreign Office
Daimler Chrysler AG
Freudenberg Foundation
Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation
DSGV German Saving Banks Association

ISBN: 978-3-929446-20-3

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PART I

Roma and Sinti demand equal rights for Europe's largest minority

Roma and Sinti, who make up the largest minority in Europe today with approx. 10 to 12 million members, share with the Jews the terrible experience of disfranchisement, persecution and systematic extermination in Nazi-occupied Europe. Half a million members of Roma minority fell victim to the Holocaust: an experience which is burned deep in the collective memory of the Roma and Sinti minorities, but which is still barely acknowledged by the majority in their respective countries of nationality. As a consequence of the Holocaust, the international political system is now extremely sensitive to the various forms of anti-Semitism, whose rise we have observed with great concern in recent years. In contrast to this, there is neither an awareness of the historical dimension of the crimes of genocide committed against our minority nor of the present-day racism which Roma and Sinti are subjected to in many countries.

Roma and Sinti are still associated with homeless »nomads« in the minds of many people. This contrasts with the historical fact that members of our minority have been integrated in and citizens of their respective countries of nationality for many centuries, particularly in the European countries. For this reason, most of the European governments have in the meantime recognized Roma and Sinti as national minorities, who, in addition to the national culture of the majority, also cultivate their own cultural identity, which above all includes the minority language, Romany. The terms »Roma« and »Sinti« are the authentic proper names of the minority – they mean »person« in the minority language. In this respect, the members of the minority living in Eastern Europe are called »Roma« and those of Central European origin »Sinti«. On the other hand, the foreign term »gypsy« is regarded by the most members of the minority as discriminatory.

Since the end of the Cold War and the opening-up of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in 1990, the living conditions of the minority have drastically deteriorated as a result of nascent racism. However, racistly motivated violence and discrimination against Roma and Sinti have also significantly increased in a large number of countries in Western Europe. As the New York Times correctly observed in a commentary in March 2006, the members of the

minority are nowadays subjected to marginalization and racism to an extent which corresponds to the situation of the Afro-Americans in the United States up to the middle of the 1950s.



On 13th October 1999 in Usti nad Labem (North Bohemia) the town authorities had, under police protection, erected a 2 metres high by 62 metres long concrete wall in order to separate a predominantly Roma inhabited quarter from a terraced housing estate. In the eyes of the international public the wall became a symbol for the racism directed against the Roma. After massive protests the city council decided on 23rd November to demolish the wall. (Photo: Picture Alliance)



With symbolically bound hands Gizela Lackova protested against the building of the wall. (Photo: Picture Alliance)

An important reason for the continued marginalization and discrimination of Roma and Sinti are structures of prejudice and racist clichés which have been substantially influenced by the misanthropic racial ideology of the National Socialists and the associated fascist regimes. In view of these ideological lines of continuity, it is hardly surprising that Roma and Sinti are not only socially disadvantaged to a considerable extent, but also are repeatedly the victims of open violence. The authorities in Eastern and in Western Europe have recorded a drastic increase in racist violence against minorities by neo-Nazis; however, such attacks increasingly emanate from the security forces themselves.



After the state had radically cut their welfare benefits the Slovakian Roma staged massive protests in February 2004. The photograph shows a police operation in progress in a Romani settlement in the Eastern Slovakian district capital of Trebisov on 24th February 2004. On this day the police proceeded with a major raid against Trebisov's Roma. (Foto: Picture Alliance)

Only rarely can the perpetrators expect consistent prosecution and conviction by the police and legal authorities. As a result, the obviously racistly motivated murders of two Bulgarian Roma by military police officers in 1996 were not punished by the competent authorities; only after a judgement of the European Court of Human Rights issued in 2005 has the Bulgarian state been obliged to investigate the racist background to this crime. The Court issued a similar adjudication in a comparable case in Romania; in all probability, however, the perpetrators will escape criminal prosecution appropriate to a state governed by the rule of law.



Following a summons from the racist »Patriotic Front« skinheads march through the town of Prerov (Moravia) demonstrating against the Romanian Roma living there. (19th March 1994). (Photo: Ullstein Bild)



During the night from the 4th to the 5th February 1995 four inhabitants of a Roma settlement in Oberwart (Burgenland) became the victims of a targeted bomb attack. This was, until this date, the worst racist motivated violent crime in Austria since 1945. Although it was at first played down as an "accident" by official quarters the investigators soon brought the bombing into connection with a series of letter bomb attacks presumably dispatched by right-wing extremist groups in Austria since 1983. Amongst the victims of the 28 attacks was Vienna's Mayor Helmut Zilk whose hand had been torn to pieces. In October 1997 the police took the former topographer Franz Fuchs into custody. Fuchs was sentenced to life imprisonment by Graz County Court in March 1999 and committed suicide in his cell a year later. In January 2000 a memorial was erected in Oberwart in remembrance of the victims of the bombing.
(Photo below: Picture Alliance)



The forced sterilisation of Roma women, several hundred cases of which have been documented in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in recent years represents a particularly serious case of human rights violation. This practice was in general use under the communist regimes and has been continued by many doctors on their own responsibility in the now democratically organized states after the political turnaround of 1989/90. The protests of human rights organisations and well-known personalities such as the US Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (the Commission on Security and Cooperation of the American government also dealt with these cases in August 2006) have contributed to these violations against human rights becoming publicly known. But unfortunately in many of the concerned states there are no effective countermeasures. This misanthropic practice is all the more monstrous, as the forced sterilisation of thousands of Roma and Sinti was an integral component of the policy of genocide in the National Socialist state.



A Romani woman carries her child which was injured by stones thrown by Kosovo Albanians. The picture was taken in Col on 21th July 1999. (Photo: Ullstein Bild)

On 14th October 1999 representatives of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma inspect destroyed houses from Roma families in Prizren (Kosovo). They are accompanied by representatives of the local Roma minority, the UNO-mission, the UNHCR, the OSCE and by KFOR troops. The Central Council advocated the acceleration of the rebuilding measures.



The expulsion of more than hundred thousand Roma from Kosovo as part of the so-called ethnic cleansing, particularly during the Kosovo war in 1999, is a tragedy whose extent is hardly known. Members of our minority still live under the constant danger of racist incursions by militant nationalists. For years now, we have made protests to the politically responsible people about the continuation of the forcible deportation of Roma refugees until the safety of the people in Kosovo is guaranteed. Another serious case of violation of the human rights of Roma and Sinti is the accommodation of civil war refugees in various camps in Kosovo, which is under UN mandate. Well over 500 members of the Roma and Sinti minority have been living in these camps since 1999. They were constructed by the UN administration on the site of a former lead mine in Mitrovica. As a result of investigations by the World Health Organization, it has been known since the year 2000 that the inhabitants of the camps suffer from life-threatening heavy metal poisoning. Children and pregnant women are particularly affected. The UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is responsible for the refugee camps and, after worldwide protest, constructed an alternative camp for the Roma refugees in the spring of 2006. However, this camp is only a few metres away from the existing ones. As a result, the health of the inhabitants is still under threat and no long-term solution of the situation is in sight.



The president of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma Romani Rose and representatives of the IMADR delegation visit the Ghandi Grammar School in Zvolen (Slovakia) on 7th June 2005. Such institutions should provide gifted Roma children with a better opportunity to have an academic education.

Politically responsible people still deny the existence of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti, especially in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; the members of the minority are mostly described as a »social

problem« and have therefore only themselves to blame for their marginalization and their frequently appalling living conditions. Instead of effectively protecting the members of the Roma minorities from discriminations and racism, many politicians contribute to the dissemination of stereotypes and stir up anti-Ziganistic as well as anti-Semitic feeling in the population. In addition to this, the media plays an important role in the dissemination of racist stereotypes of the minority, especially through the discriminatory characterization of those accused of a crime as »Roma« or »Sinti« or other terms in press or TV reports. Moreover, the World Wide Web is increasingly developing into a platform, which is used by right-wing extremists for the dissemination of hate propaganda against Roma and Sinti and Jews, and against which there is no internationally effective legal provision. At the same time, the denial of the Holocaust is a central component of the neo-Nazi ideology.

The extreme right-wing propaganda is aimed at people, who frequently have an inadequate water supply, electricity, heating or sewerage system and who have to live on demarcated housing estates. Reforms of the social systems such as the recent ones in Slovakia or the Czech Republic have further intensified the existing poverty of the members of the Roma and Sinti minorities and worsened the prospects of the people concerned for a self-determined life. The discriminatory practice of sending Roma pupils to special schools for the mentally handicapped or concentrating them in special Roma classes which have worse facilities than comparable schools of the respective country is a scandal which has deprived the largest minority in Europe of its long-term future. Extensive studies, such as the one published by the »European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia« in May 2006, provide documentary evidence of these practices in many European states. Against this background, it is hardly surprising that the rate of unemployment of Roma and Sinti has also dramatically increased since the collapse of the socialist economy, in which members of the minority were mostly employed as industrial workers, and is as high as 90 percent in many regions. Roma and Sinti have de facto virtually no opportunity to find an apprenticeship or a job in many places, whereby the deeply rooted patterns of prejudice play a role which should not be underestimated.

Educational work on the historical facts of the racial and extermination policy perpetrated against the Roma and Sinti in the National Socialist state, including its ideological and social assumptions, is very urgently required to combat anti-Ziganism and to subdue the traditional clichés about the minority, and it must be an important component of on-going strategies against racistly motivated

violence and marginalization. A new exhibition of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma with the title »The Holocaust against the Roma and Sinti and present day racism in Europe« is dedicated to this objective. The exhibition will open at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on 30th January 2007 as part of the International Holocaust Memorial Day. Roman Herzog, the former German Federal President, said the following about the extent and historical importance of the crimes against humanity committed against the Roma and Sinti in a speech he gave on 16th March 1997:

»The genocide of the Sinti and Roma was carried out from the same motive of racist mania, with the same deliberation, with the same intention of a planned and final extermination as the genocide of the Jews. They were systematically murdered in complete families from the very young to the very old over the entire sphere of influence of the National Socialists.«

The objective of the exhibition is to embed a crime of genocide in the collective memory of the nations of the world which was committed in the twentieth century and has been suppressed for decades and to raise the awareness of the political decision-makers of the particular historical responsibility they bear towards the Roma and Sinti minorities.

In addition to historical information, the consistent implementation of international protective provisions – in particular the »Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities« and the »European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages« of the Council of Europe – is required for an improvement in the protection of the Roma and Sinti from racism and discrimination, as well as an extension of the protection of minorities through new legal arrangements. In conjunction with other international organizations, the United Nations has created an extensive system of Conventions for the Protection of Human Rights, which are binding under international law. However, their effectiveness is based on the complete ratification, application and monitoring of these international legal obligations, something which is still not the case in many countries. In addition to the existing protective provisions, extended legal steps against racism and discrimination are necessary; this requirement was also supported by the US government within the framework of OSCE conferences. This especially applies to the prohibition of discriminatory practices in media law and to the dissemination of racist demagogic slogans in the Internet. In addition, the equal opportunities of Roma and Sinti require the establishment of living conditions for the members of the minority which befit human beings. National governments must make clear their political will for the promotion of

their Roma and Sinti minorities through the implementation of adequate infrastructure projects, to which the United Nations and organizations such as the European Union must make a considerable contribution. The members of the minority and their own organisations should be included from the planning stage to the implementation of such infrastructure projects to a far greater extent than has hitherto been the case.

Only if we systematically resist racism and discrimination in this way will majorities and minorities be able to co-exist peacefully with equal rights in all countries of the world.

**Appeal of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma
and national Roma organisations from Europe
to the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon**

handed over by the delegation of the Roma and Sinti on 30th January 2007 on the occasion of
the opening of the exhibition »The Holocaust against the Roma and Sinti and present day racism
in Europe« at the headquarters at the United Nations Headquarters in New York

The representatives of the Roma and Sinti from various countries in Europe appeal to the United Nations to intensify its engagement for the protection of the human rights of the Roma and Sinti minorities in Europe and throughout the world. In this regard, they call for the creation of the office of a UN special representative for Roma and Sinti questions. The Secretary General should assign this task to a qualified representative of the Roma and Sinti minorities.

Roma and Sinti have lived for many centuries as citizens of their respective countries of nationality in all countries of Europe as well as in many other countries of the world. In the same way as the Jews, the National Socialists persecuted and murdered our people for being »racially inferior« in all the occupied territories and killed 500,000 members of our minority in the concentration and extermination camps. Even now, more than 60 years after the Holocaust, Roma and Sinti in Europe – where they form the largest minority today with 10 to 12 million members – fall victim to racist attacks by neo-Nazis or by state police authorities almost every day. They are often evicted and forced into ghetto-like residential areas.

Children are taught in special ghetto or remedial schools which are well below the standard of the majority, thereby wrecking their prospects for a future with equal rights. As a consequence of the marginalization and discrimination, members of the minority frequently have no access to basic facilities such as electricity, water and sewerage – a comparable situation to that of the millions of people living in the slums of Asia or of Latin America. This is a scandal, which is unworthy of the European states, which are founded on the protection of human rights.



Secretary General of the United Nations,
Ban Ki-moon. (Photo: Picture Alliance)

Within the scope of important conventions and resolutions, the United Nations has done a great deal in the past for minorities under threat and created the basic conditions for their protection and advancement, also for the Roma and Sinti. This particularly applies to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) of 1965 as well as to the »UN Declaration on the Rights of National, Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities« of 1992. In particular, the »UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination« (CERD) plays a major role in the verification of the implementation of these protective laws. The »UN High Commissioner for Human Rights« and the »Independent UN Expert for Minorities«, who has been incumbent since the year 2005, also perform important work.

In spite of these encouraging first signs, our experience in many states is that the protection and funding programmes for Roma and Sinti are either inadequately implemented or are inadequate to counteract effectively the massive discrimination of our minority. Against this background, the UN special representative for Roma and Sinti questions should formulate specific measures to improve the protection of human rights in close cooperation with the political representatives of the minority. Such measures must focus on the following areas in particular:

Protection against racism and discrimination

In order to improve the protection against racistly motivated criminal offences, such crimes must at last be systematically prosecuted by the police and legal authorities. At the same time, racist motives should be taken into account with an increase in penalty. In particular, neo-Nazis use the Internet in an appalling manner for the dissemination of racist hate propaganda. This must at last be prosecuted on the basis of a binding international agreement.

Measures for an improvement in the housing, educational and employment situation

An important prerequisite for the equal opportunities of Roma and Sinti in Europe is the establishment of housing conditions for the members of the minority which are fit for human beings. In this respect, the long-term objective must be to eliminate the ghettos. Any form of discrimination and segregation of Roma and Sinti in the education sector must be counteracted,

and targeted educational and employment programmes must be developed for the members of the minority.

Legislation against stigmatising descriptions and reporting

An important reason for the persistence of racism and discrimination against Roma and Sinti are the stereotypes and clichés of the minority which were moulded by the National Socialists. Such stereotypes are still revived today in a great variety of ways, for example through the portrayal of Roma and Sinti as »wanderers« who have no connection to their native land. Such a generalized comparison of the members of the minority with wanderers is also found in many international conventions and resolutions. International organizations must refrain from reinforcing existing stereotypes in this manner; in contrast to this, the members of the majority societies must be informed about the contribution of Roma and Sinti to the history and culture of their respective countries of nationality by means of comprehensive educational measures. In the media, Roma and Sinti are also often portrayed in a generalized way, criminalised and thereby marginalized. This discriminatory representation must be combatted through statutory measures.

Protection and equal opportunities for the Roma in Kosovo

The expulsion of more than a hundred thousand Roma and Sinti from Kosovo during the Kosovo war is a tragedy whose extent is hardly known. Members of our minority still live under the constant threat of racist attacks by Albanian nationalists and are faced with major obstacles in obtaining access to basic services in health care, education or the legal system. Refugee camps for Roma and Sinti in the north of the Mitrovica region under the management of UNMIK are a particularly horrifying case. Hundreds of people living on the site of a former lead mine are exposed to life-threatening heavy metal poisoning here. The United Nations must ensure that basic minority rights are considered in the negotiations over the future status of Kosovo and are implemented, and that the living conditions of the Roma in the refugee camps are improved immediately.

About the Exhibition:

»The Holocaust against the Roma and Sinti and present day racism in Europe«

The presentation of the exhibition in the Lobby of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 17th January 2006.



In most European countries today the vast majority of people remain totally unaware of the National Socialist genocide of the Roma and Sinti minority which claimed some 500,000 victims during the Second World War. As a consequence of the failure to overcome this ignorance the racist clichés and stereotypes about the Roma and Sinti, which were heavily influenced by Nazi propaganda, persist until the present day. These prejudices, passed down the generations, are among the main reasons for the perpetual wave of racially motivated crimes of violence which are still being committed against the Roma and Sinti in Europe today. Roma and Sinti suffer discrimination and prejudice in all social strata: a disadvantaged minority numbering some 10 million.

Against this backdrop, the exhibition seeks to impart a greater appreciation of the past in an attempt to help dissolve current situations of conflict. In focusing on the Holocaust against the Roma and Sinti and its European dimension, the main aim is to expose a crime against humanity which to this day eludes all historical comparison and remains unimaginable in its enormity. Like the Jews, the Roma and Sinti were rounded up, disenfranchised, ghettoised and finally deported to the extermination camps, all in the name of National Socialist racial ideology. With no respect for persons and individuals, National Socialism subjected infants and the elderly alike to the same de-humanising treatment. The National Socialists denied these people the right to exist, collectively and definitively, merely because they had been born Sinti, Roma or Jews.

As regards content, the exhibition is subdivided into four areas. The first part documents the beginning disenfranchisement of the German Roma and Sinti following the National Socialist accession to power up to the outbreak of the Second World War and the first deportations to occupied Poland. The second part of the exhibition covers the genocide of the Roma and Sinti in Nazi-

occupied Europe. The exhibition seeks to highlight the distinctive features of the persecution in the different occupied and allied states, against the backdrop of the overarching themes common to the National Socialist extermination policy. The third major area documents the systematic homicide of Sinti and Roma from virtually every European country in the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp. Finally, the fourth part of the exhibition picks out the main developments since 1945 in Europe, turning the spotlight on the public avoidance to confront and acknowledge the Nazi genocide against the Roma and Sinti and on the emergence of the civil rights movement in the Federal Republic. One particular emphasis is on current forms of discrimination against the national Roma and Sinti minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. Using selected examples, the exhibition demonstrates that Roma und Sinti are increasingly subject to open and violent racism and continued social prejudice.

The layout and design of the exhibition is meant to compare and contrast the terror and organised persecution of the Nazi regime with the normality of everyday life of the Roma and Sinti. Personal testimonies and family photographs take centre stage in the exhibition in a bid to unveil the victims and show the individuals behind each unique story. In putting faces to the victims, the exhibition seeks to dispel the myth of the »gypsy image« passed down through the centuries and used by the Nazis for their criminal ends.

The act of remembering the Sinti and Roma slain during the Second World War entails an implicit mandate that each European nation state ought to examine more closely its own role during the German occupation. In many cases the government agencies of the occupied countries or those allied with Hitler's Germany were party to the crimes of genocide against the Jews and the Roma and Sinti. Scheduled to tour various Eastern and South-East European countries after its opening in Strasbourg, the mobile exhibition is an attempt to initiate historical analysis and allow the societies in Eastern and South-East Europe to come to terms with this dark chapter in their own history.

The exhibition is lead-managed by the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma in collaboration with numerous national Roma organisations. With an overall budget of almost € 150,000 the exhibition project was helped to fruition by the sponsorship of the DaimlerChrysler AG, the European Commission, German Federal Cultural Foundation, the German Federal Foreign Office, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Hermann Niermann Foundation. In terms of dimensions the mobile exhibition extends some 70 metres in length and comprises 84 boards measuring 2 metres in height and 0.6 to 1 metre in width.



The panel of speakers at the opening ceremony of the exhibit in Strasbourg, from left to right: Gernot Erler, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, Josep Borrell Fontelles, Romani Rose, Lily van Angeren, Livia Járóka.

After its official opening to the public at the European Parliament in Strasbourg the exhibition has been presented in various European countries, among them Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland, and is going to be shown at further European destinations in the next few years.



The opening ceremony in the European Parliament, Strasbourg.

PART II

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

As a prerequisite for readmission to the international community of states, the in 1949 newly founded Federal Republic of Germany soon officially recognised the Jewish victims of the holocaust and offered them at least material »compensation« for the distress they had suffered. The genocide of our minority was denied for decades, however. The survivors were cheated of their moral recognition as victims of the National Socialist »racial policy« and of their claims for compensation. In the majority of cases, even the property stolen by the Nazis was not returned. The competent authorities or medical appraisers did not accept that damage to health and loss of training and education were due to persecution. In this connection, they represented undisguised racist opinions which were a continuation of the National Socialist racial ideology.



A demonstration in front of the Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigation against the »special registration« of Roma and Sinti by the police (January 1983).

Many of the perpetrators who were responsible for the genocide of our minority were able to work their way up the ladder without hindrance at public authorities or in private industry. The deportations of Roma and Sinti to the extermination camps were ostensibly justified as »criminal-preventive«. This thinking even found its way into the judgements of the highest German courts. Even in the academic world and at the former places of persecution, the places of remembrance and memorial, the genocide of the Roma and Sinti minority remained a marginal issue which was worth a footnote at most.

This gradually began to change with the political self-organisation of the people in question and the foundation of a civil rights movement which drew attention to its concerns from the end of the seventies through public activities. In particular, the hunger strike in the concentration camp memorial at Dachau at Easter 1980, which, amongst other things, was directed at the methods of racist special registration of our minority at judicial and police authorities on the basis of files from the National Socialist period and even with the assistance of former SS personnel in some cases.

Easter 1980 the efforts of the civil rights movement reached an important stage. A hunger strike at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial in which Holocaust survivors also participated received widespread international media coverage. The hunger strikers demanded an assessment of the Nazi genocide of the Sinti and Roma and demanded the abolition of racial profiling procedures which Sinti and Roma at that stage still had to endure at the hands of the police and legal authorities. These were performed on the basis of old Nazi records and to some extent by former SS personnel. Eventually, after seven days, the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior yielded to the hunger strikers' demands and announced the discontinuation of racial profiling. However, racist methods of this kind are still in practice by the police to this very day.



At the beginning of the hunger strike the participants laid down wreaths at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.

INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune
 Published with The New York Times and The Washington Post
German Gypsies Seek Justice

By John Dornberg

MUNICH — The name, Dachau, remains indelibly engraved on the memory of mankind as the site of the first of the Nazi concentration camps.

Some 206,000 prisoners were incarcerated there during the 12 years it was in operation and nearly 32,000 of them killed — actually a small fraction of the victims of the Third Reich. Yet Dachau has remained a haunting symbol of a regime of terror.

Thus, it seems only fitting that the camp is a grim memorial museum reminding West Germans of the horrors of their nation's past.

Since Good Friday, when 20 Gypsies began an unlimited hunger strike on its grounds, it has also become an embarrassing reminder of the intolerant present.

The demonstrators described themselves as "the forgotten victims of the Holocaust," and in a sense they are. At least 500,000 — according to some estimates as many as 1 million — European Gypsies were murdered in the death camps during the Hitler era. But unlike Jews, who have received billions of dollars — directly and indirectly, in the form of payments to Israel — from the West German government as restitution and compensation for their suffering, the Gypsies and their survivors have barely been paid a penny.

But the purpose of the hunger strike is not so much to draw attention to their plight under Nazism or the lack of reparations as the fact that Gypsies remain subject to intense discrimination in West Germany today — a manifestation of deeply ingrained myths as well as the xenophobic streak in the German psyche.

As Romani Rose, spokesman for

the German Federation of Sinti (Gypsy) Peoples and one of the strike organizers, put it after an ecumenical memorial service at Dachau last Friday: "We are no longer being gassed, shot and tortured, but we are still being persecuted, ostracized, humiliated and subjected to police reprisals."

Rejected

Gypsies, for example, are forbidden by law to camp at public trailer parks. Their claims to German citizenship are more often rejected than honored. Their campsites are exposed to frequent police harassment, usually on thin pretext and usually in the form of raids replete with machine-gun-toting cops accompanied by dogs.

Given past history, one might have expected a planned demonstration against such discrimination to win widespread support and acclaim. That, unfortunately, was not the case. On the contrary, for a while last week it looked as if the 20 hunger-strikers might be barred from the concentration camp memorial.

The Bavarian Castles, Museums, Gardens and Lakes Administration — which, ironic as it sounds, maintains Dachau, raised objections because "the former concentration camp should not serve as a forum for demonstrations on current problems."

The Protestant dean of Munich declined to participate in the ecumenical service preceding the strike. The Catholic archdiocese expressed reservations that the service might be "misunderstood" as a political action. Even the leader of Munich's Jewish community revoked a previous declaration of solidarity with the Gypsy demonstrators in defer-

ence, it appears, to the sensibilities of Bavarian state authorities.

Strange?

Well, not really, considering that the hunger strike is aimed in part against Bavaria's Minister of Interior Gerold Tandler.

Defunct Agency

It seems that a now defunct agency of the ministry, euphemistically called the *Landfahrszentrale* — roughly translatable as "surveillance center for vagabonds" — was largely responsible for the official discrimination and many of the reprisals to which Gypsies in West Germany have been subjected in the postwar years.

Established after the war, it became the repository for all the dossiers and lists used by the Gestapo and SS to imprison and liquidate Gypsies during the Third Reich — not, as was the case with Jews, on the basis of race but on grounds that Gypsies were categorized as "asocial, criminally inclined elements" requiring "preventive custody."

For nearly 25 years these archives were made available to police authorities throughout West Germany and provided the basis for special surveillance and continued harassment of Gypsy communities.

The records, moreover, were also used to quash various legal claims by Gypsies for recognition as victims of racial oppression under the Nazis, a precondition for obtaining compensation.

The agency itself was abolished in 1970, but to this day no one knows, or has said, what happened to its discriminatory files on hundreds of Gypsy families.

What the demonstrators at Dachau hope for, above all, is a public

explanation from Tandler regarding the disposition or whereabouts of these archives as well as other documents dating from the Hitler era, not to even mention, as Rose phrased it, "a word of public rehabilitation from Tandler, an acknowledgement from him that our people have been done an injustice by agencies of the state of Bavaria."

Until it is forthcoming, the 20 intend to continue their hunger strike, hoping, though, "that it will not lead to the extreme of one more death at Dachau."

It is not the first time in recent months that these forgotten victims of the Holocaust have spoken up in a demand for restitution and equal rights. Moreover, it is a fact that they have received some strong and influential moral support.

Veil Speaks Out

A conference and rally on the grounds of the memorial at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp last fall drew Simone Veil, president of the Parliament of Europe and a survivor of Auschwitz, as keynote speaker. Former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt has declared his solidarity with the Gypsy cause. The Bundestag is expected to start deliberations later this month on a measure to provide Gypsy survivors of Nazi oppression with financial compensation.

But meanwhile, the Dachau demonstration is meeting with anything but an enthusiastic response hereabouts.

Small wonder in a land where one can still see signs in housing areas exhorting residents to "keep the trash bins clean" and to not "dump garbage next to them, the way Gypsies do."

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An Article about the hunger strike in the Harold Tribune, 8th April 1980.

The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma with its headquarters in Heidelberg was founded in February 1982. Since then, this umbrella organisation, which includes 16 member associations (regional federations and regional associations), has represented the interests of the Sinti and Roma living in Germany at national and international level. A critical turning point in the civil rights work was the 17th March 1982, when Helmut Schmidt, the former Federal Chancellor, received a delegation of the Central Council and officially recognised under international law the National Socialist crimes committed against our minority as genocide for reasons of so-called »race«. This was reaffirmed by his successor in office, Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in the course of a debate in the Bundestag in November 1985.



Meeting with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, 17th March 1982.

After more than 20 years of persistent civil rights work by the Central Council and the regional federations, a perceptible shift in the way our minority is dealt with has occurred in many social areas. This also applies for the question of the so-called compensation: since the middle of the eighties, the Central Council has been able to bring about a fundamental change in the previous discriminatory compensation practice on behalf of our surviving concentration camp victims and has forced the competent authorities to revise decisions in favour of the people concerned in several thousand individual cases.

In addition to the successes of our work, there are still a great many problems which urgently require a solution, however. And so, the Central Council has been strongly objecting for some time to the forms of discriminatory and racist coverage of Sinti and Roma in a major part of the press in Germany and in other countries and also in public and private broadcasting. We call for the German Federal states to introduce a prohibition on discriminatory practices in the regional media laws and in civil service law, since a great many discriminatory reports are initiated by official reports identifying the ethnic origin of accused individuals. In view of the disastrous role which the misanthropic smear campaigns in the press and the systematic criminalization of Jews and Roma and Sinti played in the run-up to the National Socialist policy of extermination, such a prohibition on discriminatory practices is urgently required.

The constant reproduction of clichés about our minority in the media is mainly responsible for the fact that Sinti and Roma are still not regarded as a part of society by many people, but are stigmatised as imaginary »outsiders«. It is all the more important that the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

was able to reach one of its most important political objectives after many years of effort and discussion: the statutory recognition of the German Sinti and Roma, who number approximately 70,000 today, as a national minority. In the »Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities« of the Council of Europe signed in Strasbourg on 11th May 1995, the Sinti and Roma, who have been domiciled in Germany for centuries, and the Danes, Friesians and Sorbs living there are expressly awarded the status of a national minority. German Romany was also recognized as a minority language pursuant to the »European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages«. So far in Germany, however, the Charter has not been implemented in most German states.

In the context of the ongoing accession process of the European Union (EU) the Central Council monitors governmental compliance with the political criteria for EU membership as defined by the 1993 Copenhagen European Council and lobbies for a better protection of Roma and Sinti against discrimination and racism.



Shigeyuki Kumisaka, the Secretary General of the Buraku Liberation League, holds an address at the opening of the Documentation and Cultural Centre in Heidelberg, 16th March 1997.

At the international level, the Central Council is closely cooperating with organizations representing other minorities – as e.g. the Buraku people in Japan – out of the conviction that human rights are indivisible and that the elimination of discrimination and the fight for the creation and implementation

of human rights standards needs the common support of all discriminated minorities. Thus, Romani Rose, who serves as the chairman of the Central Council since its foundation, also was one of the cofounders of the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) which is as a global network of concerned individuals and minority groups with regional committees and partners in Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America. Amongst others, this global network stands up for the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and lobbies UN meetings and major world conferences.



General meeting of the »International Movement against all Forms of Discrimination and Racism« (IMADR) in Heidelberg on 28th October 1997. The main work of the IMADR, which has its seat in Tokyo, is the improvement and enforcement of international human rights and minority agreements. Since its establishment in 1988 the IMADR has championed the rights of the Roma and Sinti.

Edward Kennedy, Romani Rose and Ms Lantos, whose Jewish husband Tom Lantos has been saved from Nazis persecution in Hungary, at a meeting in Washington in September 1986.



Simon Wiesenthal and Romani Rose at a press conference in Frankfurt, 12th March 1990.



The 2nd August 1944 was the day when the last remaining men, women and children imprisoned in the »Gypsy Camp« were sent to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. It has become a European Day of Remembrance in honour of the Roma and Sinti Holocaust victims. In 2004, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary, delegations of survivors and their families from many countries came together at the memorial on the grounds of the former concentration camp to commemorate the victims. In the front row are the Hungarian state secretary and member of the Roma minority László Teleki, the president of the Polish Roma association Roman Kwiatkowski and the Auschwitz survivor Hugo Höllenreiner.



Romani Rose in a meeting with the then Minister for Youth, Family and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Dr. Kinga Köncz, Budapest, 27 January 2006.

Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma



In the Federal Republic of Germany it took almost four decades for the government, in 1982, to recognize politically the genocide of the Sinti and Roma. Throughout that period the Nazi policy of extermination directed against our minority was largely ignored or, at most, relegated to a footnote both in the writing of history and in commemorative works.

The opening of the Centre on 16th March 1997 (first row from right to left: Romani Rose, Federal President Roman Herzog, Yehudi Menuhin, President of the German Parliament Rita Süßmuth).



On the Jewish side it was a matter of course after the end of the war that the crimes committed against the Jews would be comprehensively documented. Jewish institutions themselves went to considerable efforts to ensure that the Holocaust against the European Jews was brought to public attention and can never be forgotten as a fixed component of historical memory. From the beginning the overriding aim of the civil rights movement of the German Sinti and Roma has been to create a centre that would look back on and reappraise our history – and in particular that of the Nazi crimes of genocide against our minority – and anchor it in the collective memory. We understood this task to be an indispensable contribution both to democratic self-understanding and to the political culture of the Federal Republic of Germany. It needed to be shown that prejudices and state discrimination which are founded directly on the racial

prejudices and thought structures of the National Socialists continue to this day and maintain their hold on the image of our minority in the public.

In 1990 the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma was set up in a building in the old part of Heidelberg bought with the support of the Federal Government. After several years of renovation and expansion, the Centre and the world's first permanent exhibition on the Holocaust against our minority was opened to the public in March 1997.

Sections

One of the central tasks of the Dialogue section is to document the cultural contributions which the Sinti and Roma minority has provided in the fields of literature, the plastic arts and music, among others, and to help to overcome the clichés in this area. Research in the last few years has focused on the history of Hungarian gypsy music (with particular consideration given to the relationships between Roma music and the Viennese classical period) and the significance of the music of the Sinti and Roma for the development of jazz and flamenco.



In cooperation with specialists from Germany and elsewhere, the Dialogue section also held several conferences on the genesis, structure and function of »gypsy« stereotypes. The main areas of interest lay both in literature – from the classical works of literary history through children's and young people's literature to lexicons and encyclopaedias – and in film, which as a mass medium has, since the early days of the silent movie, always played an important role in

the passing on and proliferation of anti-gypsy prejudices (and unfortunately still does so).

The department of Education is dealing mainly with the question of equal opportunities for Sinti and Roma in the educational system. The staff collects data from various surveys on educational matters and conducts opinion polls to evaluate the situation. The work includes textbook analyses as well as the design and performance of teacher training courses. The department works together with different organisations in the field of elaborating teaching materials in order to reduce prejudices against Sinti and Roma in particular as well as minorities in general.

A second focus of the department of Education is to care for the implementation of the European Charta for Minority Languages regarding the German Romanes. Romanes is spoken in many families besides German as a second mother tongue and plays a vital role for Sinti and Roma identity. To secure the survival of the language which was threatened in its existence during Nazi-dictatorship and genocide the department seeks to strengthen the consciousness of the significance of Romanes among the members of the minority.

A further section is the Advice centre. Its central tasks includes advising the survivors of Nazi crimes in their pursuit of compensation following the decades in which Sinti and Roma were systematically excluded when it came to »reparation«. It includes representation of the individual claims of the persons concerned against the regional compensation agencies as well as the regional and administrative courts in order to appeal against previous unjust decisions and to enforce the granting of pensions for the damage to health suffered through the persecution.

The Documentation section has the task of documenting the more than 600 years of the history of the minority in Germany, although the emphasis to date has been on the Nazi crimes of genocide. From the start priority was given to interviews with survivors of the genocide, and the recording of their memories on tape or video (also in cooperation with the Shoah Foundation). We regard this as an important component of historical research, for our old people are the last ones who, as survivors of the Holocaust, can pass on to the next generations the terrible experiences they suffered at first hand.

Staff of the Centre are carrying out extensive research in many international archives. In the meantime our institution boasts a sizeable stock of pertinent documents which will continue to be expanded in the future. Of particular importance for our work is the building up of a pictorial archive, especially the

systematic collection of private testimonies such as old family photographs which the survivors and their relatives make available to us. We have since gathered together a collection that is unique in its kind. For many exhibition projects the Documentation Centre provided eye-witness reports, biographies of victims and in particular material from our own archive, such as the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Imperial War Museum in London.

Exhibitions

Family photographs and biographies of the people affected by persecution and extermination also form a central component of the world's first permanent exhibition on the Holocaust against our minority, which was opened to the public in our Heidelberg Centre in March 1997. The history of the persecution of our people in the so-called »Third Reich« is extensively documented over an area of almost 700 square metres: from the step-by-step deprivation of rights and exclusion from virtually all areas of public life through to state-organized genocide in the whole of Nazi-occupied Europe. We also thought it important not to represent the extermination process in isolation, but rather to bed it in the internal and external political development of the National Socialist regime. The intention was to create a memorial to our persecuted and murdered people that went beyond the portrayal of historical facts and circumstances.



The permanent exhibition
in Heidelberg.

The Documentation Centre cooperates closely with national and international memorial sites and other national Roma and Sinti organisations. One of the most important results of this cooperation was the Heidelberg Centre's realisation of the permanent exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. Since August 2001 the dimension of the Roma and Sinti genocide is documented in Block 13 of the former »Stammlager«. After decades of suppression the Centre campaigns for other concentration camp memorial sites to analyse, in depth, the crimes perpetrated against the Roma and Sinti.

The permanent exhibition of the Nazi genocide of the Roma and Sinti at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.



PART III

The Nazi Genocide of the Roma and Sinti: A summary

Introduction

Roma and Sinti have lived for many centuries in Europe. They represent old-established minorities that have evolved historically within the individual countries that make up the continent.

The reality of Roma and Sinti life must be fundamentally distinguished from the centuries old – partly malicious, partly romanticized – clichés about »gypsies«. The National Socialists also made use of these stereotypes in their propaganda to legitimise their acts of persecution against the Roma and Sinti – just as the persecution of the Jews was justified with anti-Semitic misrepresentations.

Since the seizure of power of the Nazi-party Roma and Sinti were progressively stripped of their rights, robbed of their livelihoods, and eventually deported to the extermination camps. The »Final Solution« policy was based on »race« and was completely different from all previous forms of persecution. The Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti represents a fundamental caesura in the centuries-old history shared by minority and majority groups within society. The aim of the murderous policies organized by the NS state was to completely eradicate the minority, from infants to old men and women. According to estimates 500,000 Roma and Sinti in National Socialist occupied Europe fell victim to the Holocaust, a crime inconceivable in terms of its sheer scale that defies all historical comparison.

The marginalization of the Sinti and Roma in the »Third Reich« after 1933

On 20th January 1933 Adolf Hitler, the »Führer« or leader of the Nazi-Party, was appointed as Reich Chancellor. Within a few months, the National Socialists destroyed the democratic constitutional state. Although at this early point in time terror and persecution were directed mainly at political opponents, Roma and Sinti were being maltreated from the very beginning and dispatched to the first concentration camps.



Racial scientists carrying out their pseudo-scientific tests. The whole body was measured.
(Photo: Bundesarchiv)



Sinti and Roma from Burgenland (Austria) at roll call in the concentration camp of Dachau, end of the 1930s. (Photo: KZ-Memorial Dachau)

From the start the Nazis declared Sinti and Roma to be a »foreign race« that was to be excluded from the »national community« and ultimately »eradicated«. Like the Jews, »gypsies« were beyond all legislation, their very right to existence questioned. The first high point of the systematic deprivation of rights came with the »Nuremberg race laws« which – on the direct instruction of Reich Interior Minister Frick – were applied to Sinti and Roma and to Jews alike.

Even in the mid-thirties Sinti and Roma families were being interned in special concentration camps that were erected in many German towns. Men, women and children had to live behind barbed wire under SS or police supervision. The internees were left helplessly at the mercy of their guards, and maltreatment leading to death was a frequent occurrence. Later these camps served as collection points for the deportations of Roma and Sinti to the death camps in occupied Poland.

At the same time, the minority was being systematically excluded from virtually all areas of public life. Even before the beginning of war Roma and Sinti were subjected to debarment from employment, excluded from military service, their children refused entry to schools. The declared aim of the National Socialists was the »racial isolation« of all Sinti and Roma from the »German-blooded« population. A host of special regulations restricted their lives ever more tightly.

In order to turn the »final solution of the gypsy question« he had announced in his edict of 8 December 1938 into reality, Himmler commissioned the »Racial Hygiene Research Office«, headed by Dr. Robert Ritter and already in existence in Berlin since 1936, with the complete registration of the minority. This was a crucial prerequisite for the implementation of genocide. The immense trouble to which Ritter and his apparatus went in order to leave no gaps in the genealogical registration of the German Sinti and Roma (including extensive anthropological examinations) is evidence of the importance by which the Nazis measured the »gypsy question« – regardless of the fact that Sinti and Roma in Germany were a small minority in terms of numbers. The fanatical »race researchers« were still trying to track down the last »gypsy« until the end of the war in order to hand them over for extermination.

The road to the Holocaust

The Nazi »race policy« took on a new dimension with the launch of the Second World War in September 1939. The »Reich Security Main Office« under the leadership of Reinhard Heydrich, which was formed in Berlin that same month

from an amalgamation of the security service and the security police, took over management of the »solution to the gypsy question« as well.



The deportation of the Sinti and Roma from the Hohenasperg assembly camp near Stuttgart to occupied Poland on 22 May 1940. (Photo: Bundesarchiv)

The initial military successes of the Wehrmacht allowed the NS-authorities to deport all those considered to be of »foreign race« from the Reich into the newly occupied territories. From the beginning German Sinti and Roma were included alongside the Jews in the deportation plans of the SS leadership. This is evidenced by the final minutes of a conference convened by Heydrich on 21 September 1939, when the deportation of all »gypsies« and Jews living in the German Reich to the south-eastern part of occupied Poland, the so-called General Government, was decided. The way for the planned deportations was also prepared by Himmler's so-called Detention Decree of 17 October 1939, which ordered that all »gypsies« were no longer allowed to leave their home areas under threat of internment in concentration camps.

Half a year later, on April 27, 1940, Himmler ordered the deportation of 2,500 Roma and Sinti to the »General Government of Poland«. In Hamburg, Cologne, and the fortress of Hohenasperg near Stuttgart special assembly centres were set up in which Sinti and Roma were herded together for several days.

After their arrival in the »General Government« the deported Roma and Sinti had to work as forced labour on road building sites, in quarries or in armament

firms to the point of total exhaustion, even the old people and the children. Hunger, cold, and maltreatment described everyday life. Those who fell ill were left to their own devices.

Above all as of 1942 the German Sinti and Roma who had been deported to occupied Poland as well as the Polish Roma fell victim to the execution squads of the SS or were murdered in the gas chambers of the extermination camps.

The Holocaust of the Roma and Sinti in Nazi-occupied Europe

In June 1941 Hitler's troops invaded the Soviet Union. Right from the beginning the war against Russia was classified as an ideological war of annihilation. Heinrich Himmler was assigned the task of implementing the elimination plans. SS »task forces« with mobile killing squads systematically scoured the areas behind the front for Jews, Roma, and others, who were murdered immediately on site.

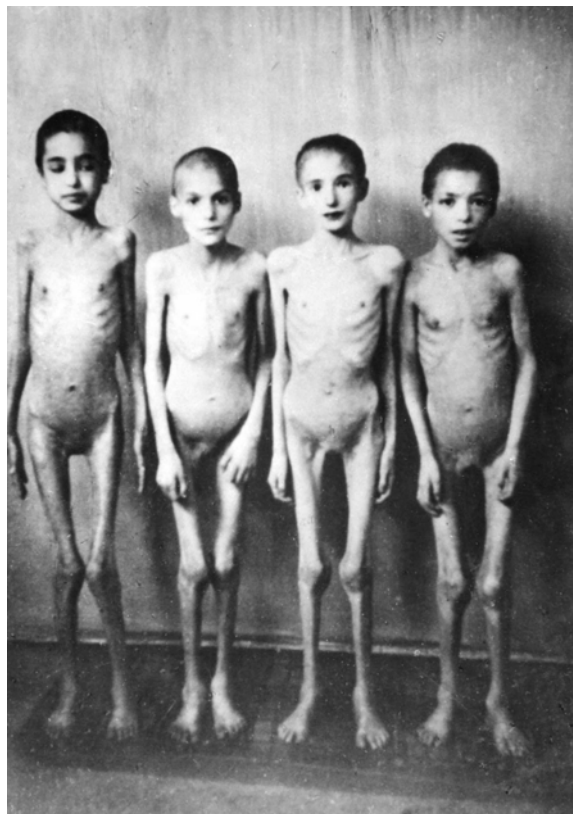
In the occupied areas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe the Roma and Sinti population fell victim to these systematic murders. Men, women, and children were murdered, without exception, and buried in mass graves. Even today no one knows the exact numbers.

Roma and Sinti were among the first victims along with the Jews of the assembly-line mass killings in the extermination camps erected in occupied Poland. A few weeks after the systematic deportation of Jews from the Reich territory had begun, 5,000 Austrian Roma and Sinti – a large number of them women and children – were deported to the Lodz ghetto in November 1941, where a »gypsy ghetto« was set up immediately beside the Jewish ghetto. Adolf Eichmann was responsible for the organisation of the transports of Roma and Sinti as well. In January 1942 the surviving internees of the Lodz »gypsy ghetto« were taken with their Jewish fellow-sufferers to Chelmno extermination camp, where they were suffocated in gas trucks immediately after their arrival.

As part of the »Final Solution« Heinrich Himmler ordered on December 16, 1942 that the Roma and Sinti still remaining in the Reich be deported to the extermination camp of Auschwitz. Shortly thereafter corresponding orders for the occupied areas were sent out. As of February 1943 just under 23,000 Roma and Sinti from eleven European countries were dispatched to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Most of them came from the Reich territory: over 13,000 women, men, and children.



Settela S., a Sinti girl, in the process of being transportet from Westerbork to Auschwitz on 19th May 1944. Settela was murdered in the gas chamber in the night of 2nd to 3rd August along with her mother and her siblings. (Photo: Nederlands Audio-visueel Archief, Rijswijk)



Sinti and Roma children who were abused by Dr. Mengele in medical experiments. (Photo: State Museum of Auschwitz-Birkenau)

The Roma and Sinti families arriving at Auschwitz-Birkenau were sent to Camp Section BIIe, known by the SS as the »Gypsy Camp«. 20 barracks lined the right and left of the camp road. Up to 1,000 people were crammed into one barrack on three-tiered beds made of planks. Arriving prisoners were registered separately by gender in the camp admissions books. A »Z« and a number were tattooed onto their arms; small children received tattoos on their upper thighs.

By the beginning of April 1943 over 12,000 people had arrived in the »Gypsy Camp«. In March and May 1943 the first mass gassing took place during which over 2,700 men, women and children were murdered with the poisonous gas Zyklon B. The regime of terror enforced by the SS, slave labour, or the horrendous conditions in which they had to live account for the deaths of most of the Roma and Sinti deported to Auschwitz. Infants born in the camp and small children had almost no chance of survival.

After selections by the SS in the spring and summer of 1944, about 3,000 Roma and Sinti were deported for »extermination through work« to other concentration camps in the Reich territory. 2,900 people remained behind in Auschwitz, particularly old people, women, and children. They were all murdered in the gas chambers during the so-called »liquidation« of the »Gypsy Camp« in the night from August 2 to 3, 1944.

In many concentration and extermination camps SS doctors conducted medical experiments on Roma and Sinti prisoners. Alongside military and state departments it was the doctors themselves who requested concentration camp prisoners as »test material«. The medical experiments were associated with unspeakable agony for the victims. SS doctors forced Roma and Sinti prisoners to breathe in poison gas, they infected them with viruses, or conducted operations on them without anaesthetics. The few survivors were branded for life by the physical and psychological injuries.

Dr. Mengele had been the camp physician in the so-called »Gypsy Camp« since June 1943. His particular field of interest was identical twin children on whom he performed cruel experiments. He wanted to prove that special »racial features« are inherited. Mengele killed many Roma and Sinti personally in order to dissect their bodies.

There is no more forceful proof of the totality of the National Socialist desire for the extermination of the minority than the fate of the children. Even the Roma and Sinti children, who had initially been sent to children's homes following the deportation of their parents, were subsequently centrally registered and deported to Auschwitz. And even those Roma and Sinti children who grew up in »Aryan« adoptive families were not spared.

Right up to the end of the war Roma and Sinti were victims of National Socialist fanatics. Many others died soon after their liberation from the effects of concentration camp imprisonment. However, for the few survivors there was never to be a real liberation. Even today they still suffer from subsequent health problems and the ever-recurring memories.

Chronology of the Holocaust against the Roma and Sinti

From 1933

Sinti and Roma are gradually excluded from public life and are deprived of their civil rights.

15th September 1935

Promulgation of the »Nuremberg Race Laws«. Intermarriage between Sinti and non-Sinti is forbidden.

November 1936

Establishment of the »Research Centre for Racial Hygiene« under the leadership of Dr. Robert Ritter in the Reich Ministry of the Interior. The centre produced about 24,000 »race reports« by the end of 1944.

June 1938

Hundreds of Sinti and Roma are deported to the concentration camps of Dachau, Buchenwald, Mauthausen and Sachsenhausen.

8th December 1938

Himmler's »Basic Decree«: this is to »begin settlement of the gypsy question with regards to the existence of the race«. The »Reich Security Main Office« »ascertains« »gypsy« affiliation on the basis of Ritter's »race Reports«.

From March 1939

In Germany orders for the special marking of Sinti and Roma are issued and special »race identity papers« are given out. After the beginning of the war Sinti and Roma had to wear armbands with the letter »Z« in the occupied territories.

21st September 1939

Conference of the departmental heads of the Security Police and the leaders of special action groups under the chairmanship of Heydrich on the prepara-

tion of the deportation of the »remaining 30,000 gypsies« from the Reich territory to Poland.

16th October 1939

The Security Service »SD Danube« informs SS-Oberführer Nebe that »three or four wagons of gypsies can be joined onto the first Jewish transport« leaving Vienna on 20th October 1939.

17th October 1939

Himmler's »Confinement Decree«. The 21 »gypsy offices« from Königsberg, Prague, Vienna and Munich to Hamburg, under the Reich Security Main Office, must erect assembly camps similar to concentration camps in preparation for the deportations to occupied Poland.

30th January 1940

Heydrich holds a conference with SS-leaders on the deportation of »all Jews of the Ostgaue and 30,000 gypsies from the Reich territory and the Ostmark as the last mass movement into the General Government«.

27th April 1940

Himmler's order for the first deportations of whole families. The deportation trains with 2,800 German Sinti and Roma into the General Government« leave in May from Hamburg, Cologne and Hohenasperg near Stuttgart.

1940

In Lackenbach concentration camp south of Vienna, murdered Roma and Sinti are buried in mass graves on the Jewish cemetery; the others are deported to the Lodz ghetto.

From summer 1941

Roma and Sinti are systematically shot behind the eastern front by so-called Einsatzgruppen as well as units of the Wehrmacht and the Ordnungspolizei. SS-Einsatzgruppen leader Otto Ohlendorf states in the Nuremberg war crimes trial: »There was no difference between the gypsies and the Jews, the same order applied for both«.

10th October 1941

Conference on the »solution of the Jewish question« and the »gypsies to be evacuated« of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia between the SS leaders Heydrich, Frank, Eichmann and others.

January 1942

5,000 Roma and Sinti from the ghetto in Lodz are murdered in gas vans in the extermination camp of Kulmhof. All East Prussian Sinti and Roma families, most of them farmers with their own farms and cattle, are deported to the concentration camp of Bialystok and from there to Auschwitz in 1943.

29th August 1942

Confirmation of the German military administration in Serbia: there with the help of gas vans, the »Jewish question and the gypsy question have been solved«.

14th September 1942

Reich Minister of Justice Thierack minutes a discussion with Goebbels: »Dr. Goebbels is of the opinion that Jews and gypsies are quite simply to be exterminated. The idea of annihilation through work is the best.« On 18th September 1942, Thierack discussed with Himmler and other SS-leaders the implementation of forced labour in SS-enterprises, German armaments industry and concentration camps.

16th December 1942

Himmler's »Auschwitz Decree« for the deportation of 22,000 Sinti and Roma from Europe into the section of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp termed the »gypsy camp«.

May 1943

Dr. Josef Mengele becomes SS camp doctor in Auschwitz. His first action is to send several hundreds Sinti and Roma to the gas chambers. He continues his »research into twins« through the killing of Jewish and Sinti children. In other concentration camps too, Sinti and Roma are victims of agonizing medical experiments.

16th May 1944

The attempt by the Auschwitz camp commandant to send the remaining 6,000 Sinti and Roma in the »gypsy camp« to the gas chambers collapses in the face of the resistance of the men, armed with spades, poles and stones.

2nd August 1944

Dissolution of the »gypsy camp« in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Of the 6,000 Sinti and Roma still alive in July 1944, 3,000 are deported to other concentration camps, the other 3,000 murdered in the night of 2nd to 3rd August.

May 1945

The number of Roma and Sinti killed in concentration camps and by SS-Einsatzgruppen by the end of the war is estimated at half a million.

Statements about the genocide of the Roma and Sinti

The genocide of the Sinti and Roma was carried out from the same motive of racial mania, with the same premeditation, with the same wish for the systematic and total extermination as the genocide of the Jews. Complete families from the very young to the very old were systematically murdered within the entire sphere of influence of the National Socialists.

Former German Federal President Roman Herzog at the opening of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma in Heidelberg, 16th March 1997

Of the 50,000 Roma, who lived in the Second Polish Republic, only very few remained alive. In the same way that no Jewish family exists which has not lost a relative in this hell, so there isn't a single Roma family which has not grieved for a victim.

Former Polish Foreign Minister Wladyslaw Bartoszewski at the Remembrance Day on the 57th anniversary of the »extermination« of the »gypsy camp« at Auschwitz-Birkenau, 2nd August 2001

The criminal racist madness of the Nazis ostracised the Sinti and Roma, robbed them of their rights, subjected them to unimaginable humiliation, took their wealth and possessions, then dragged them off to the death camps and finally killed them. The Sinti and Roma became victims of the same criminal racist madness of the Nazis as the European Jews. As innocent victims, they were pursued relentlessly with the same degrading and inhuman brutality and systematically killed (...). The genocide of the Sinti and Roma is part of our history. And, as Germans, we bear the historic and moral responsibility for this.

Former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer at the Remembrance Day event at the Department of Foreign Affairs on the 60th anniversary of the Sinti and Roma revolt in Auschwitz-Birkenau, 16th May 2004

The United Nations must never forget that it was created as a response to the evil of Nazism, or that the horror of the Holocaust helped to shape its mission. (...) The Roma, or Gypsies, were treated with the same utter disregard for their humanity as the Jews. Nearly a quarter of the one million Roma living in Europe were killed.

Statement of Kofi Annan, Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, to the Special Session of the General Assembly, New York, 24th January 2005

During the war, the Nazis killed millions of Jews, half of whom were murdered in the camps. The fate of the Roma community should also have been total annihilation. It really is a terrifying and horrific chapter in the history of Europe.

Former Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski on the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, 27th January 2005

The Roma were also doomed to total extermination in Hitler's Plan. One cannot underestimate the sacrifice of life which was imposed on these, our brothers and sisters in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp.

Message by His Holiness Pope John Paul II at the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of the KL Auschwitz Birkenau, 27th January 2005

ANNEX



(Photo: Filip Singer)

Romani Rose

Romani Rose was born in Heidelberg in 1946 and is a symbolic figure of the civil rights movement of the Sinti and Roma, which he has considerably influenced. As a member of a German Sinti family which lost 13 members in the National Socialist concentration and extermination camps – amongst others, his grandfather was murdered in Auschwitz and his grandmother in Ravensbrück Romani Rose has been engaged in political work for the minority since the 70s and has above all

fought for the moral acknowledgement and material compensation of the wrong done to the victims. His most important political successes include the recognition of the German Sinti and Roma as a national minority in accordance with the »Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities« of the Council of Europe.

Romani Rose has been chairman of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma since 1982. He took over the management of the Documentary and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma in 1991. Together with representatives of the minority from the USA, Mexico, Argentina, Japan, India, Sri Lanka, France and the Netherlands, Romani Rose is a member of the directorate of the International Movement against Discrimination and Racism which was founded in Tokyo in 1988.

Romani Rose is the author and publisher of several books, amongst others *Civil Rights for Sinti and Roma*, *The book about racism in Germany* (1987) and »*Den Rauch hatten wir täglich vor Augen*« (We saw the smoke every day), *The National Socialist Genocide of the Sinti and Roma* (1999) and the catalogue of the permanent exhibition on the National Socialist genocide of the Sinti and Roma in the State Museum of Auschwitz (2003), which has been published in three languages. In addition, Romani Rose has penned numerous articles, including contributions for publications of the OSCE and the UNO Committee on Racism.

Contact addresses of partner organizations involved in the exhibition project

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