

# Gypsies as Victims of the Holocaust

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**While most of the research on the Holocaust has appropriately focused on the suffering of the Jewish population of Axis-occupied Europe, the Gypsies also were targeted for extinction by the Nazis. The Gypsies as a people survived the campaigns directed against them in large measure because they were located in areas under the control of governments allied with Germany. These governments generally refused to participate in the extermination of the Gypsies (just as some did not participate in the destruction of the European Jews). The majority of the Gypsy population in Axis Europe was beyond the direct control of the Nazi extermination machinery and, as a consequence, survival rates were higher. In contrast, the European Jews were concentrated in areas under direct German control, and therefore the proportion of fatalities was much higher. Geographic location thus was one major factor that explains the greater survival rate of the Gypsies compared to that of the Jews.**

The fate of the Gypsies under Nazi rule in World War II has evoked significant debate as to whether they should be considered victims of the Holocaust or simply one of the many groups that suffered as a consequence of the conflict and disruption associated with the war and occupation by Axis armies. The basic question is to what extent were the Gypsies a special target—a group, like the Jews, slated for elimination by Hitler and the Nazi security apparatus? In order to assess the intentions of the Nazi leadership in this regard, the fate of the Gypsies will be compared to that of the Jews drawing upon a framework developed by Helen Fein for understanding the severity of the persecution of Jews in different parts of Europe during the Holocaust.<sup>1</sup> This comparative analysis will provide significant insight into understanding to what extent the Gypsies can be considered victims of the extreme Nazi genocidal policies that became the Holocaust

## **Gypsies as Group Victims**

Gypsies were a group that was targeted for maltreatment by the Nazi regime. To the Nazi racial theoreticians the Gypsies were considered objects or parasites on society

rather than human beings.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, their ill-treatment and murder was justified because it resulted in the removal of undesirable and impure elements in Europe.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the Gypsies had faced discriminatory laws and ill-treatment beginning in the Middle Ages, and many European governments had laws that were designed to discriminate against Gypsies; their ill-treatment was often overlooked by authorities.<sup>4</sup> In the German Reich after the Nazis came to power, Gypsies, like the Jews, were subjected to special laws designed to separate them from the “Aryan” population and to prevent racial intermixing.<sup>5</sup> Gypsies, like the Jews, were classified as second-class citizens under German racial laws before World War II, and they were considered to be aliens.<sup>6</sup> Also, as is now reasonably well-known, once the war had begun, the Gypsies were targets for atrocities, mass murders, slave labor, and deportation to death camps.<sup>7</sup> When the Gypsies were deported, the bureaucratic parallels in classifications to the Jews were remarkably similar.<sup>8</sup> It is true that a limited number of German Gypsies were in theory to be spared. Those who were of pure Gypsy blood would be permitted to survive within their own community.<sup>9</sup> In actual fact, the distinctions made little difference when it came time for the Gypsies to be collected for the concentration camps.<sup>10</sup> Even though it is clear that Gypsies did suffer tremendously during the war, had they indeed been targeted for genocidal elimination?

A large majority of the studies of the Holocaust and related Nazi policies focus on the victimization of the European Jews, as is appropriate for a group that suffered six million losses. The Gypsies have frequently not been mentioned or only mentioned in passing. There have, however, been works that have focused on the Gypsies as a group targeted for extermination by the Nazis.<sup>11</sup> The suggestion that Gypsies were also victims of the Holocaust has generated a reaction among Holocaust scholars who argue that the extent of or their level of victimization was not on a par with that of the Jews. Yehuda Bauer has argued that the Gypsies were not victims of the Holocaust, in part as a consequence of a well-considered set of definitions of mass murder, genocide, and the Holocaust or *Shoah* (Catastrophe).<sup>12</sup> Mass murder consists of large-scale killing. Genocide is an effort to destroy an ethnic, racial, or national group by destroying its leaders and culture, including the destruction of elites and other members of the targeted group. “Genocide, as thus defined, would include the Nazi policies towards Czechs, Poles, or Gypsies. . . .”<sup>13</sup> Holocaust or Shoah is reserved for efforts to annihilate a group. The Jews under Nazi domination and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire are the two modern instances of such attempts. These definitions closely correspond to the United Nations’ definitions of partial genocide and total genocide (i.e., the Holocaust). As a consequence of these important distinctions, Bauer has consistently argued that the Holocaust is both different from other examples of genocide and that it cannot, for example, be extended to include Gypsies or Poles among its victims.<sup>14</sup> He has even suggested that the Jews were in fact a special target, and that from the Nazi perspective, World War II was really a war waged against the Jews.<sup>15</sup> Jack Eisner has come to similar conclusions in this regard.<sup>16</sup>

Even Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, who chronicle the Nazi campaigns against the Gypsies, note that the Gypsies in Greece survived because it was “probable that the Germans were too occupied with their prime victims, the Jews, to have time for the Gypsies.”<sup>17</sup> Steven Katz undertook a comparative historical analysis of the Holocaust and other genocidal situations, considering the Gypsies as one possible example.<sup>18</sup> He concluded that the Nazi persecution of the Gypsies was not equivalent to that of the Jews. While Gypsies did indeed suffer under Nazi rule, “their fate, however cruel, was qualitatively different, at once less ritualistic, less uncompromising, less categorical.”<sup>19</sup> Perhaps his most telling point is that less than a quarter of the Gypsies within the reach of the Nazis died compared to more than eighty-five percent of the similarly situated Jewish population.<sup>20</sup> In effect, these arguments in reaction to the suggestion that Gypsies be treated as victims of the Holocaust conclude that the Nazi policy was not aimed at the extermination of the Gypsies in the same single-minded fashion that Jews were targeted. The issue is whether the Nazis intended the total extermination of the Gypsies as they did for the Jews or if the Gypsies were victims of partial genocide in Bauer’s terms.

Although the death rates for the Jews and Gypsies were quite different, part of the explanation for those differences may be due to the different levels of access that the Nazi authorities, and especially the extermination apparatus, had in the various areas of Europe under Axis control. Some areas were directly incorporated into the Reich, others were under direct occupation, and yet other countries were allied states wherein German policies could not be unilaterally implemented. Helen Fein in her study of the Holocaust distinguished three levels of SS control corresponding to the above distinctions.<sup>21</sup> While she clearly identifies a variety of other factors that influenced the fatality levels for the resident Jewish populations of various territories, her threefold schema proved useful in explaining differential survival rates. Application of this same model to the Gypsies can be instructive in understanding the greater survival rate among Gypsies in Axis Europe. This kind of analysis could support Bauer and Katz, for example, if it indicates that the Nazis were indeed more lenient in regards to the Gypsies, particularly if fatality levels for Gypsies were consistently lower than for Jews in the same types of areas. On the other hand, if local collaboration or non-collaboration explains a great deal of the differences, then it is possible that the Nazi regime was equally intent on exterminating both the Gypsies and the Jews.

### **Comparison by SS Zone**

The relative populations and fatalities for the Jews and Gypsies in different parts of Europe were totalled by individual territories and SS control zones utilized by Fein in her study of the Holocaust. These figures are contained in Table 1. There were two modifications made to the mapping used by Fein.

Luxembourg, a country she did not consider, was included in SS Zone 1 since

**Table 1**  
**Fatality Rates for Jews and Gypsies by SS Zone**

Territory	Jewish Population			Gypsy Population		
	Pre-War	Losses	Percent	Pre-War	Losses	Percent
SS Zone 1						
Germany/Austria	240,000	210,000	87.5	31,200	21,500	68.9
Luxembourg	5,000	1,000	20.0	200	200	100.0
Protectorate	90,000	80,000	88.8	13,000	6,500	50.0
Poland	3,300,000	3,000,000	90.9	44,400	28,200	63.5
Lithuania	155,000			1,000	1,000	100.0
Latvia	93,000	228,000	90.1	5,000	2,500	50.0
Estonia	5,000			1,000	1,000	100.0
Serbia	23,000	20,000	87.0	60,000	12,000	20.0 <sup>1</sup>
Ukraine/White						
Russia	1,875,000	1,145,000	61.1	42,000	30,000	71.4
Totals	5,786,000	4,684,000	80.9	197,800	102,900	52.0
SS Zone 2						
Norway	1,800	900	50.0	?	60	
Netherlands	140,000	105,000	75.0	500	500	100.0
Belgium	65,000	40,000	61.5	500	500	100.0
Salonika	50,000	45,000	90.0	?	?	
Totals	256,800	190,900	74.3			
SS Zone 3						
Allied States						
Finland	2,000	0	0.0	?	0	0.0
Bulgaria	64,000	14,000	21.9	100,000	0	0.0
Italy <sup>2</sup>	40,000	8,000	20.0	25,000	1,000	4.0
Hungary <sup>3</sup>	650,000	450,000	69.2	100,000	28,000	28.0
Rumania	600,000	300,000	50.0	300,000	36,000	12.0
Slovakia	90,000	75,000	83.3	80,000	1,000	1.25
Croatia	26,000	22,000	84.6	28,500	28,000	98.2
Other						
Italian Greece <sup>2</sup>	20,000	9,000	45.0	?	50	
France	350,000	90,000	25.7	40,000	15,000	37.5
Denmark	8,000	0	0.0	?	0	0.0
Totals <sup>5</sup>	1,850,000	968,000	52.3	673,500	109,050	16.2

<sup>1</sup>Estimate which may be quite low

<sup>2</sup>Deportations and killings after Italian capitulation in 1943

<sup>3</sup>Deportations and killings principally after puppet government installed in 1944

<sup>4</sup>Estimate may be low

<sup>5</sup>Totals for Gypsies exclude Finland, Greece, and Denmark.

Sources. For Jewish losses, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War against the Jews, 1933-1945* (New York: Bantam, 1975), pp. 483-544. For Gypsy losses, Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, esp. pp. 183-84. Figures for Italian Greece and Salonika, and Gypsy deportations from Norway taken from Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).

the Grand Duchy was incorporated into the Reich, and the local population was subject to the same laws and limitations as was true for other parts of the Reich such as Germany or Austria. Fein also did not include any part of the Soviet Union other than the Baltic states in her analysis. Base population figures for Jews and Gypsies as well as fatalities are less comparable for the Soviet Union as a whole because large portions of Soviet territory were never under Axis control. Thus, in many parts of the Soviet Union the Jewish and Gypsy populations were beyond the reach of German

racial policies. All of White Russia and virtually all of the Ukraine, however, came under German control, thus permitting the application of German racial policies to the populations of these areas. Jews and Gypsies in these two parts of the Soviet Union were under direct German military administration and subject to deportations just as the populations of the Baltic states were. As a consequence, it seemed appropriate to include these areas within SS Zone 1 as well.

### SS Zone 1

Table 1 indicates that there were clear differences among these three zones. In SS Zone 1, where the German authorities had the greatest freedom of action, the Jewish losses were more than ninety percent of the prewar population. The losses among the Gypsies were somewhat lower, but they were at least more than half of the prewar population. In White Russia and the Ukraine, where there were significant numbers of both Jews and Gypsies, the Gypsy fatalities were even proportionately higher. Of all the figures in this section of the table, the ones for Serbia are the most doubtful in the case of the Gypsies. Serbia was the only part of dismembered Yugoslavia to come under direct German control in 1941, thus permitting the direct application of SS policies on “undesirables.” Figures for Gypsy fatalities in Yugoslavia are very imprecise. Kenrick and Puxon listed only the minimum figure of 12,000 for Serbia, which they thought could be low.<sup>22</sup> Rüdiger Vossen in a more recent tabulation of Gypsy deaths lists a prewar population of 100,000 Gypsies in Yugoslavia and calculates that 90,000 were killed.<sup>23</sup> This figure would indicate that approximately 50,000 of the 60,000 Gypsies in Serbia were eliminated. If this rather high figure is accepted, then Gypsy fatalities in SS Zone 1 were 72.6% instead of 53.9%. It is unlikely that Gypsy losses were this high. Some of the Gypsies survived in rural Serbia given the looseness of control by German and local collaborationist forces, unlike Serbian Jews who were concentrated in urban areas and therefore more vulnerable.<sup>24</sup> Precise estimates for Gypsy losses are more difficult in part because many deaths occurred within Serbia rather than in the death camps.<sup>25</sup> Gypsies were systematically chosen as hostages for execution in retaliation for German casualties resulting from partisan attacks. A hundred hostages were executed for every German soldier killed and fifty for every German who was wounded.<sup>26</sup> These practices undoubtedly resulted in higher fatality rates than is reflected in the 12,000 figure. The suffering of both Jews and Gypsies within Serbia was indeed great. Belgrade and the areas of Serbia under effective Axis control were declared both Jew- and Gypsy-free in 1942.<sup>27</sup> Such a declaration further indicates that Gypsy losses were higher than the minimum listed in Table 1. With higher, though not the maximum, estimates for fatalities in Serbia, it is likely that total Gypsy losses in Zone 1 were approximately sixty–sixty-five percent of the prewar population, lower than the losses suffered by Jewish inhabitants of these areas but still very high in proportional terms.

## SS Zone 2

There were only a few territories in SS Zone 2. In these areas German domination was less than in Zone 1, but the consequences were almost as deadly for the Jewish inhabitants. In the case of the Gypsies, the small populations in Belgium and the Netherlands were virtually eliminated.<sup>28</sup> There were few Gypsies in Norway, but at least some were sent to concentration camps, where they died.<sup>29</sup> There were probably some Gypsies in Salonika and neighboring parts of Thrace, but there is no evidence that any were deported to the death camps. The small numbers of Gypsies in Zone 2 do not permit a valid comparison, although with limited evidence it would appear that fatality levels were high.

## SS Zone 3

The greatest differences in fatality levels among Jews and Gypsies appears in SS Zone 3, and thus these territories merit more detailed commentary. In these areas, the survival rates of both Jews and Gypsies were higher than in Zones 1 or 2 because authorities in Berlin had to negotiate for action against the chosen targets rather than simply order death squads to begin killing or deportations to occur. The attitudes of these allied Axis governments in facilitating or hindering the persecution of Jews has been well noted. Even so, the Gypsies in this part of Europe were spared to a much greater extent than the corresponding Jewish populations.

In Scandinavia, Finland was a limited German ally in the attack on the Soviet Union, while Denmark was indirectly governed by the Germans so as to permit the fiction of Danish neutrality to be maintained. There were relatively few Gypsies in either country, but they were protected by their governments.<sup>30</sup> Just as Finland refused to deport its Jewish citizens and Denmark arranged the rescue of its Jewish population, neither government cooperated in deporting Gypsies.<sup>31</sup> The figures for both Jews and Gypsies for Denmark and Finland compare quite favorably with Norway in SS Zone 2 where half of the Jewish inhabitants were eliminated and a handful of Gypsies were sent to the camps as well.

France was the only other West European country in Zone 3. There was persecution of both Jews and Gypsies in Vichy and occupied France. The lower degree of German control, however, meant that more than half of the Jews and Gypsies survived the war. In this respect, France compares quite favorably with the Netherlands and Belgium in Zone 2. Interestingly enough, the Gypsies clearly fared worse than the Jewish population on a proportional basis. One reason was that the Gypsies were an easier target for deportation. Their collection for transport to death camps was facilitated by the fact that many Gypsies had already been detained and placed in camps by French authorities in 1940, and thus they were concentrated in camps at the time of the capitulation later in the same year.<sup>32</sup> This is probably one of the few instances where Gypsies were an easier group to identify and prepare for deportation.

It is noteworthy that the German authorities did avail themselves of the opportunity presented to quickly deal with a large number of Gypsies.

In Southern Europe and the Balkans there were numerous German allies and client states. As is well-known, Italy did not cooperate in the deportation of Jews, either in Italy itself or Italian occupation zones in France, Greece, and Yugoslavia. As Germany's major European ally, Italy was able to resist pressure to cooperate in the destruction of Jews, and some Italian forces did protect Jews from persecution.<sup>33</sup> Gypsies were similarly protected from deportation in Italy and Italian-governed territories. The worst measure taken against Gypsies was banishment to Sardinia and islands in the Adriatic under Italian control.<sup>34</sup> Italian occupation forces also protected Gypsies from German or local persecution.<sup>35</sup> The losses among both Italian Jews and Gypsies occurred after the Italian capitulation when German troops occupied northern and central Italy. Gypsy victims in Italy were quite few in number and a much smaller proportion than was the case for the Jews, notwithstanding the rescue of many Italian Jews.<sup>36</sup> It is quite possible that the earlier banishment of the Gypsies to offshore islands ultimately worked to their advantage since they were further removed from German control. Jewish and Gypsy deportations in Albania, southern Greece, and parts of Yugoslavia occurred only after the Italian capitulation and the imposition of direct German control.<sup>37</sup> After the Italian surrender southern Greece came under direct German occupation. A handful of Gypsies were caught for deportation, but many more Jews were sent to the death camps. Greek church officials and government leaders intervened to protect the deportation of the Gypsies.<sup>38</sup> Individual Greeks in many areas saved many Jews, but a large number were deported.<sup>39</sup> In effect, after the Italian surrender in 1943, Italy could be more effectively classified as having been in SS Zone 2. The period from 1940 to 1943 facilitated the survival of many Jews and Gypsies until the time when continued German military control of many areas was unlikely to last very long.

Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary were German allies, and thus their governments had somewhat more freedom of action *via-à-vis* Berlin. This freedom of action resulted in much higher survival rates for Jews and Gypsies than was the case in SS Zones 1 and 2. Bulgaria refused to deport any of its citizens, whether Jews or Gypsies. The German ambassador in Sofia noted that the Bulgarians were uncooperative in the deportation of Jews because they had lived too long with Armenians, Greeks, and Gypsies to appreciate the negative implications of Jews in their midst.<sup>40</sup> The Bulgarian government did, however, acquiesce in the deportation of Jews in occupied Thrace (Greece) and Macedonia.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the Jewish fatalities listed in Table 1 represent the Jewish population of these newly-occupied territories rather than any Bulgarian citizens.

Jews and Gypsies in Rumania also suffered less than their counterparts in SS Zones 1 and 2, even though Rumania had its own internal antisemitic traditions that

facilitated the still high losses among Jews. Even with this historical enmity, however, the Rumanian wartime governments usually protected their own citizens. A large portion of the Jewish losses that occurred came from Bukovina and Bessarabia, territories that Rumania reoccupied after the invasion of the Soviet Union, rather than from the core lands of the kingdom. No more than 20,000 of the Jewish victims were from the Regat (the old kingdom lands).<sup>42</sup> Virtually all of the Gypsies that died in Rumanian territory were from the newly-incorporated areas as well.<sup>43</sup>

Hungary was similar to Bulgaria and Rumania in the early part of the war. The Horthy regime protected its own citizens from German demands for deportation to death camps. Hungarian Jews did suffer high casualties in the forced labor battalions that were created for them and which were assigned for duty in the Soviet Union. Jews who were not Hungarian citizens did not fare as well, and there were atrocities in some territories occupied by Hungarian forces, although there was no concerted policy of extermination.<sup>44</sup> In March 1944, however, the Germans intervened and occupied the country. New Hungarian government officials cooperated with Adolf Eichmann's team in deporting Jews. Later the Germans installed the antisemitic Arrow Cross in power, and deportations of both Jews and Gypsies occurred. Virtually all of the Gypsies sent to the death camps were arrested at this time.<sup>45</sup> As Table 1 indicates, a higher proportion of Jews were caught during this period, but it is significant that at a time when the war was lost and Soviet forces were advancing in Hungary (and elsewhere), the Germans and their local collaborators attempted to deport both Jews and Gypsies. While more Jews were caught, it is noteworthy that the Nazis were also willing to make the effort to capture Gypsies as well. All of these deportations and the consequent fatalities occurred after March 1944, when Hungary in effect could more closely be classified as having fallen into SS Zone 2 rather than still remaining in SS Zone 3.

The last states in Zone 3 were the satellite nations of Slovakia and Croatia, which graphically display the differences that self-government and local attitudes had on the campaigns against Jews and Gypsies. In both satellites the prewar populations of Jews and Gypsies were similar, but the treatment of the Gypsies was quite different in the two states. In Croatia the Ustasa targeted both groups (as well as Serbs) for extermination, and casualty rates were very high for both groups. In Slovakia only the Jews were targeted for elimination, and Tiso's government cooperated enthusiastically in the elimination of the local Jewish population. While Gypsies in Slovakia were subjected to discriminatory laws, only a handful were deported to the death camps.<sup>46</sup> Obviously, the attitudes of the Slovakian government meant that more Gypsies survived than was the case for the Jewish population.

### **A Distinction with a Difference**

The above comparison of government policies and death rates indicates that whether a territory was in SS Zone 1, 2, or 3 was a distinction that was very important for



the potential victims of Nazi genocidal policies. First, in the areas of greatest Nazi dominance (Zones 1 and 2), the Gypsies were almost as likely to suffer as the Jews. In effect, total annihilation was the goal. The somewhat higher survival rates in these areas among Gypsies might have indicated that the Jews were considered the most important group for destruction, but the Gypsies were also clearly targeted. As is well known—but often ignored in discussions of the Holocaust—the Nazis frequently depended on local collaborators in occupied territories to implement their racial policies. There were local guard units formed among the subject peoples, and these units participated in establishing ghettos, in committing atrocities, and in deporting victims. Local feeling against Gypsies in at least some areas could have been less severe than local antisemitism. Such differences could have permitted a larger portion of Gypsies to escape the death camps than was the case for the Jews. Obviously in other cases, virtually no one escaped. It is very clear that there was a need for such collaboration by the national governments in SS Zone 3 if Nazi racism was to prevail. Where the German allies refused to cooperate in deportations to the death camps, survival rates were much higher. Italy (until 1943), Finland, Bulgaria, and Hungary (until 1944) protected their citizens—Gypsy and Jew alike. “Neutral” Denmark utilized all available resources to protect its citizens as well. Slovakia deported Jews to the death camps, but very few Gypsies. Rumania protected its own citizens for the most part, at least from the Germans, if not from local persecution. Jews were more often victims of internal Rumanian policies, while the Gypsies were obviously not a concern for the wartime governments. The regime in Croatia vigorously sought to exterminate members of all types of different groups, including Jews and Gypsies in virtually equal numbers. It is possible that the Nazi regime applied greater pressure to its allies to deport Jews than it did in the case of Gypsies.<sup>47</sup> Perhaps leaders of these regimes only needed to perceive such a difference in Nazi priorities in order for the Jews to be targeted for immediate deportation with decisions about the Gypsies deferred to some later time. In any event, such a differential was clearly successful only in the case of Slovakia, a state whose leaders did frequently seek to defer to Berlin.

In the Balkans in general, as in Serbia, the Gypsies may have survived in greater percentages than the Jews by being somewhat less visible to the German occupiers.<sup>48</sup> In terms of religious affiliations, Gypsies were more likely to have adopted one of the locally dominant religions and therefore lacked a distinctive house of worship that the Nazis could utilize as a magnet to capture members of presumed inferior races.<sup>49</sup> Nomadic groups of Gypsies, as opposed to their sedentary brethren, could also perhaps more easily avoid the Nazi roundups and survive better in the countryside given their past experiences with this lifestyle.<sup>50</sup>

The differences in fatality rates among the three SS Zones goes a long way to explain the differential survival rates of the Jews and the Gypsies in Axis Europe. As Table 2 indicates, the Jewish population in Nazi-dominated Europe was overwhelm-

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of Prewar European Jewish and Gypsy Populations by SS Zone**

	Prewar Populations			
	Jewish	Percent	Gypsy	Percent
SS Zone 1	5,786,000	73.3	197,800	22.7
SS Zone 2 <sup>1</sup>	256,800	3.3	1,000	0.1
SS Zone 3 <sup>2</sup>	1,850,000	23.4	673,500	77.2

<sup>1</sup>Excluding Salonika and Norway for the Gypsies.

<sup>2</sup>Excluding Greece, Denmark, and Finland for the Gypsies.

ingly concentrated in SS Zone 1, while only a quarter of the Gypsies were in areas under such strict Nazi control.

The Gypsies in Europe were primarily located in SS Zone 3 where the antipathy of the governments in power (except in Croatia) toward the annihilation of the Gypsies made a great difference. Location in SS Zone 3 was important for the Jews as well in terms of survival rates, but there were at least some states in these areas whose governments facilitated the deportation of Jews but not Gypsies. Thus, the overall death rates of approximately two-thirds for the Jewish population in Europe and only about twenty-five to thirty percent for Gypsies becomes much more explicable when their locations in Europe are examined. The Gypsies, like the Jews, appear to have been targeted for extermination by German fascism, not just for partial genocide as was the case for Poles and Czechs. However, except for Croatia, they were not targeted for such violence by any of the European fascist movements that came to power on their own or in the wake of the victorious German armies.

### **Gypsies: The Forgotten Holocaust<sup>51</sup>**

Jack Eisner agrees with Steven Katz and others that the Holocaust was a specifically Jewish phenomenon.

Another misleading idea frequently advanced by those in the public eye is the conclusion that our concept of Holocaust should embrace several million non-Jewish civilians who perished at the hand of the Nazis along with the six million Jews. No one can deny the millions of non-Jewish victims, least of all those who lived, suffered, shared, and witnessed the starvation and slaughter of thousands of non-Jews in Majdanek or Flossen-berg or Dachau or Buchenwald. Yet there is a crucial difference: As non-Jews they were not part of a race targeted for total extermination; that is the significance of the Holocaust.<sup>52</sup>

Yet the Gypsies as a race do fit within this definition. Ultimately, the Gypsies were subject to persecution under the Nazis for racial reasons.<sup>53</sup> It was not their actions as individuals that led to their persecution. The Jews and the Gypsies were similarly treated in that they were the only two ethnic groups specially designated for extermination by National Socialist ideology.<sup>54</sup> It does seem very clear from the above analyses that the Gypsies, like the Jews, do indeed qualify as at least potential victims not

just of partial genocide but of the Holocaust. The actions against the Gypsies do not seem to fit within Yehuda Bauer's distinction of partial genocide since the killings were not limited to the elite, cultural leaders, or educated segments of the population. Instead whole communities were at least targeted and in some cases eliminated. As is obvious from the analyses of the three zones of Nazi dominance, the intent appears to have been to eliminate the Gypsies as well as the Jews.<sup>55</sup>

Notwithstanding the apparent Nazi objectives, the Gypsies fared better than the Jews. It is possible that the Nazis were *more* intent on eliminating the Jews and that once the Jewish population of Europe was annihilated, the Gypsies would be the next primary target. First the Jews, then the Gypsies. Even so, it is clear that the Nazis did not neglect opportunities to deal with the Gypsies as in France, or Hungary once the Arrow Cross was in power. The Gypsies were also indeed more fortunate in being concentrated in areas where governments might discriminate against them but were unwilling to cooperate in their wholesale murder. Steven Katz, while arguing that the Gypsies did not qualify as victims of the Holocaust did accept the UN Convention on Genocide definition in which the *intent* to destroy a ethnic, national, religious, or racial group constituted genocide.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Katz's comparisons of death rates for Gypsies and Jews is far too facile a difference for concluding that the Gypsies were not victims of the Nazi genocidal policies. Further, had Hitler and the Nazis won the war in Europe and solidified their control, the differences in the survival rates of Jews and Gypsies would likely have been similar.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, contrary to Katz and others, it seems appropriate to conclude that Gypsies as a people, race, or nation were intended to be victims of the Holocaust, not just targets of partial genocide. Given their smaller overall numbers and their often fortuitous locations, their losses were substantially less than losses among the European Jewish population. While the term genocide has been loosely applied to many situations, it is important to recognize that the Gypsies were a target for total genocide in Bauer's terms during the war. Their fate further highlights the evils that were perpetuated against the Jews and the genocidal and racial character of the Nazi policies.

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## Notes

1. Helen Fein, *Accounting for Genocide National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
2. Kristen Martins-Heuß, "Reflections on the Collective Identity of German Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) after National Socialism," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4:2, 1989, p. 197.

3. Hans Mommsen, "The Realization of the Unthinkable: The 'Final Solution of the Jewish Question' in the Third Reich," in Gerhard Hirschfeld (ed.), *The Policies of Genocide. Jews and Soviet Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 99.
4. See Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), and Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) for two detailed descriptions of the discrimination faced by Gypsies in most parts of Europe through the centuries.
5. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), p. 74; Louis L. Snyder, *Hitler and Nazism* (New York: Bantam, 1961), p. 80.
6. Sybil Milton, "Gypsies and the Holocaust," *History Teacher* 24:4 (1991), p. 378.
7. See, for example, Leo Kuper, *Genocide. Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Fraser, *Gypsies*, pp. 257–69, and Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*.
8. Milton, "Gypsies," pp. 380–81.
9. Yehuda Bauer, "The Place of the Holocaust in Contemporary History," in Jonathan Frankel (ed.), *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, Vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 210. The discussions of the preservation of a small group of "pure" Gypsies suggests that perhaps higher-ranking Nazis intended to have the group available for future scientific study or even as a scientific curiosity.
10. Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 265; Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, pp. 87–91, or as Bauer notes, the carrying out of the orders to send Gypsies to the camps were "harsher than the order itself." See Bauer, "Place," p. 210.
11. Fraser, *Gypsies*, pp. 257–69, Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, and especially Milton, "Gypsies" and idem., "The Context of the Holocaust," *German Studies Review*, 13:2, 1990, pp. 269–83. Henry Huttenbach notes the dangers of ignoring other victims. See Henry R. Huttenbach, "Locating the Holocaust on the Genocide Spectrum: Towards a Methodology of Definition and Categorization," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 3.3 (1988), pp. 289–303.
12. Bauer, "Place."
13. Ibid., p. 213.
14. For example, Yehuda Bauer, "Whose Holocaust," in J. N. Porter (ed.), *Genocide and Human Rights* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 35–46, and "Jews, Gypsies, Slavs: Policies of the Third Reich," *UNESCO Yearbook on Peace and Conflict Studies* 1985 (Paris: UNESCO, 1987), pp. 73–100.
15. This last statement was made in a letter to the editors of the *History Teacher* in response to Milton's earlier article in that journal. They quote the portion where she suggests that the war was ultimately a war against the Jews. See "Genocide or Holocaust? Gypsies and Jews," *History Teacher* 26:3 (1993), pp. 385–86; Bauer, "Place," p. 217.
16. Jack P. Eisner, "The Genocide Bomb: The Holocaust Through the Eyes of a Survivor," in Randolph L. Brahm (ed.), *Perspectives on the Holocaust* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1983), pp. 149–63.
17. Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 130, emphasis added.

- 18 Steven T. Katz, "Essay Quantity and Interpretation—Issues in the Comparative Historical Analysis of the Holocaust," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 4:2 (1989), pp. 127–48.
19. Ibid., p. 144.
20. Ibid., p. 145.
- 21 Fein, *Accounting* Although Fein concentrates in her study on Jewish victims, she acknowledges that the Gypsies were also victims of Nazi genocide.
22. Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 184. Damir Mirković, "Victims and Perpetrators in the Yugoslav Genocide of 1941–1945: Some Preliminary Observations," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 7 3 (1993), pp. 317–32, accepts a similar estimate
23. Rüdiger Vossen, *Zigeuner Roma, Sintí, Gitanos, Gypsies, zwischen Verfolgung und Romantisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Sachbuch, 1983), p. 85.
- 24 Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 119.
25. One possible reason for the low estimate is that only 12,000 Gypsies were deported from Serbia. See Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1988), p. 141.
- 26 Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 267.
- 27 Ibid., p. 268; Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 119
28. Vossen gives figures of 500 of 600 for Belgian Gypsies and 500 of 500 for Dutch Gypsies See Vossen, *Zigeuner*, p. 85.
29. Vossen gives a total of only about 200 Gypsies in Norway in 1980, *ibid.*, pp. 158–60,
30. Vossen gives totals in 1980 of about 3,000 Gypsies in Denmark and 5,000–6,000 in Finland; *ibid.*
31. Lucy Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews, 1933–1945* (New York Bantam, 1975), p. 506.
- 32 Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 266; Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, pp. 101–102.
33. Gilbert, *Atlas*, p. 78.
34. Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 268; Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 108.
35. Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 109.
36. See Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust: Persecution, Rescue, Survival* (New York: Basic Books, 1987)
37. Gilbert, *Atlas*
38. Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 268.
39. Dawidowicz, *War*, pp. 525–26; Gilbert, *Atlas*, pp. 180, 193.
40. Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, p. 131.
41. Gilbert, *Atlas*, pp. 150–51; Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England), p. 80.

42. Dawidowicz, *War*, pp. 519–22; Gilbert, *Atlas*, p. 244; Marrus, *Holocaust in History*, pp. 79–80.
43. Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 268
44. Marrus, *Holocaust in History*, p. 81.
45. Fraser, *Gypsies*, p. 268; Kuper, *Genocide*, p. 124.
46. Vossen lists 10,000 Slovakian Gypsies as victims. The differences between the treatment of Jews and Gypsies is still obvious, even with this higher estimate. See Vossen, *Zigeuner*, p. 86.
47. Pressure on Axis and client governments to deport Jews is well-documented. There has been less documentation on such efforts in the case of the Gypsies. If Jewish extermination was the first priority, then the governments that resisted or procrastinated in the deportation of Jews were less likely to be pressured about the Gypsies since the high-priority deportations had not yet occurred. Of course, it is still relevant to note that in areas of direct German control (Italy after the capitulation, Hungary after 1944, and SS Zones 1 and 2) both groups suffered tremendously.
48. Fein, *Accounting*, p. 91.
49. Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny*, pp. 119–20.
50. Fein, *Accounting*, p. 91.
51. Fraser borrows this term from Christian Bernadac which he considers an appropriate description of the Nazi efforts to eradicate the Gypsies. See Fraser, *Gypsies*, pp. 257–58, and Christian Bernadac, *L'Holocauste Oublié Le Massacre des Tsiganes* (Paris: France-Empire, 1979).
52. Eisner, "Genocide Bomb," p. 153, emphasis added.
53. Martins-Heuß, "Reflections," p. 194.
54. Fraser, *Gypsies*, pp. 257–58.
55. Huttenbach suggests that "intent" is not critical for genocide to be present. In the case of the Nazis, however, intent is key to understanding the plans to exterminate both Jews and Gypsies. See Huttenbach, "Locating the Holocaust," p. 294.
56. Katz, "Essay," p. 129.
57. Huttenbach notes that it is even possible that other peoples such as Poles and Ukrainians would have been added to the list of disposable peoples if Nazi control over large parts of Europe had continued. Huttenbach, "Locating the Holocaust," p. 300.