

Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago *The Roma – A Minority in Europe*. (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007).

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The Roma's history is one associated on the one hand with romanticized wanderings and on the other hand with centuries of persecution. Their historical documentation is often squeezed in with other memoirs and accounts. In recent years, researchers have tried to track their history but more often than not the research is fragmented and contradictory particularly on subjects such as Roma origins or population demographics. Even so, as the Roma situation has evolved into a human rights issue, it is taking a more important place on the agenda of European policy.

Who are the Roma? Are they an ethnic minority or not? What is their history? These are all questions that the present volume tries to address and plump up the somewhat underweight research on the many facets of the Roma. *The Roma: A Minority in Europe*, a compilation of ten essays, is the result of a conference held in the Tel-Aviv University by the Stephen Roth Institute in December 2002 to discuss the history and current situation of the Roma in Europe. The book is edited by two of its authors – Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago. The contributors are distinguished scholars in Roma studies or related fields from a multitude of countries: Israel, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Czech Republic and Romania.

Organized chronologically, the anthology begins with Shulamith Shahar's essay on the perceptions of Gypsies throughout the centuries, particularly in Early Modern Europe. It explores their origins and the differences within groups denoted as 'Gypsy' (10). A considerable chunk of the book is devoted to the persecution of the Roma and its culminating point during World War II. Peter Widmann discusses the rise of eugenics and criminal biology and the correlation with Roma treatment prior to World War II. Several essays discuss how Nazi Policy varied in Germany, Austria, Hungary and

Romania. The Margalit-Matras and Stauber-Vago essays focus on the complexity and interconnectedness of identity and commemoration. The authors discuss in detail the Sinti in Germany and Hungarian, Czech and Slovak Roma. In this way, the book does a brilliant job in shedding light on Romani groups and whether they consider themselves 'a diaspora' or transnational group (111).

Eva Sabotka and Pal Tamas' essays deal with the post-communist transition period and divulge the ways Roma policy has changed in Eastern Europe since 1989. The Roma situation improved from being a 'security issue' to a human rights-orientated issue (146). Pressures from the EU and other international organizations for democratic representation and formulation of a human rights framework have moved this positive change. In addition to the need for a formal channel for dialogue, much research is still needed to understand the Roma as a culture and community. The authors show that there is a large difference within these concepts from country to country or even region-to-region to indicate that Roma integration and social inclusion does not have a one-fit-all approach.

The historical, social and political issues arising from the friction between the Roma and European communities are laid out in this writing. The central theme recurring throughout the book is the persecution of the Roma throughout the centuries and in particular their genocide during World War II, a subject that has not yet been "properly and exhaustively researched." (ix) The book propagates the idea that their genocide needs to be acknowledged in order for commemoration and the creation of collective memory to take place and furthermore to act as a catalyst for future activism.

Moreover, the essays are historically significant as they mark an important meeting point between the Jewish and Romani communities. The book also broaches the issues of what constitutes ethnic identity and its boundaries, collective memory, myth-making and social constructivism. The authors draw parallels from the impact of the Jewish Holocaust,

Shoah, on the consolidation of ethnic identity and the process of nation building to better understand the role that *Porrajmos*, Roma Holocaust, has played in Roma identity creation and collective memory. By addressing these issues, the contributors hope to spur other institutions and countries to follow their example into further research.

The authors try to illustrate the Roma as an ethnic minority through methods of comparing and contrasting. The first approach compares treatment of victims such as Jews and Soviet POWs under the Nazi regime (44) and how that related to Romani treatment. The book draws on the Jewish experience to show through similarities that the Roma's persecution was on a racial basis and their fight to be recognized as a minority. The second approach utilizes case studies from different states such as Austria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia. The authors compare the varying Romani groups and their treatment across these states. The research addresses scholars and historians as well as the general public in hope to raise greater awareness about the Roma's unique history, culture and identity.

One of the merits of the book is that it successfully contributes to bridging the apparent gap on Roma discourse. The research builds on our knowledge of the genocide of the Roma by Nazi Germany and its allies. For example, Viorel Achim's essay fills a lacuna in Romanian historiography of World War II on Roma deportation to Transnistria. The author is noted to be one of the few scholars researching the fate of the Roma during World War II in Romania. Katlin Katz's essay on the persecution of Hungarian Roma also offers new information on victims, who passed through Komarom camp (70). She also stresses that the Komarom camp, only vaguely mentioned in most texts, plays an important role in the collective memory of the Hungarian Roma. Nevertheless, one shortcoming is the lack of discussion about the treatment of Roma under communist regimes and how that experience has in any way reinforced or suppressed the feelings of ethnic belonging.

Overall, the essays are short and easy to read, filled with insightful information that could serve as a basis for further research. Essays are on average twenty pages complete with a full bibliography. Additionally the end of the book includes short descriptions about the contributors. Each author tries to reflect on the various existent perceptions but leaves readers to make their own conclusions. The anthology brings us closer to what lays behind statistical numbers often mentioned in the passing in historical texts; to illuminate individual stories and the fate of communities and families.

The book is a reflection of the need in today's society to address the growing tensions between the Roma and European communities. Rising xenophobia and discrimination in various forms from employment to legislation across the old continent shows that the situation requires careful attention. The authors express concern that the Roma situation may receive less attention as the CEE states enter the EU. The book in many ways hopes to push the Roma issue into public space to encourage discussions and dialogue on social integration and ease growing anxiety.

Stephen Velychenko. *Ukraine, the EU and Russia. History, Culture and International Relations.* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

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In the last five years the European Union (EU) has established increasingly close relations with Ukraine thanks to the Action Plan in 2005 and the pro-European policy adopted by Yushenko. However, the EU is reluctant to include Ukraine as a member due to its weak and instable democracy. Alternatively, the Russian Federation (Russia) exerts considerable influence on Ukraine through the Single Economic Space, use of Sebastopol harbour, and gas pipelines. Thus, Ukraine appears to be a country caught between two highly dissimilar realms. *Ukraine, the EU and*