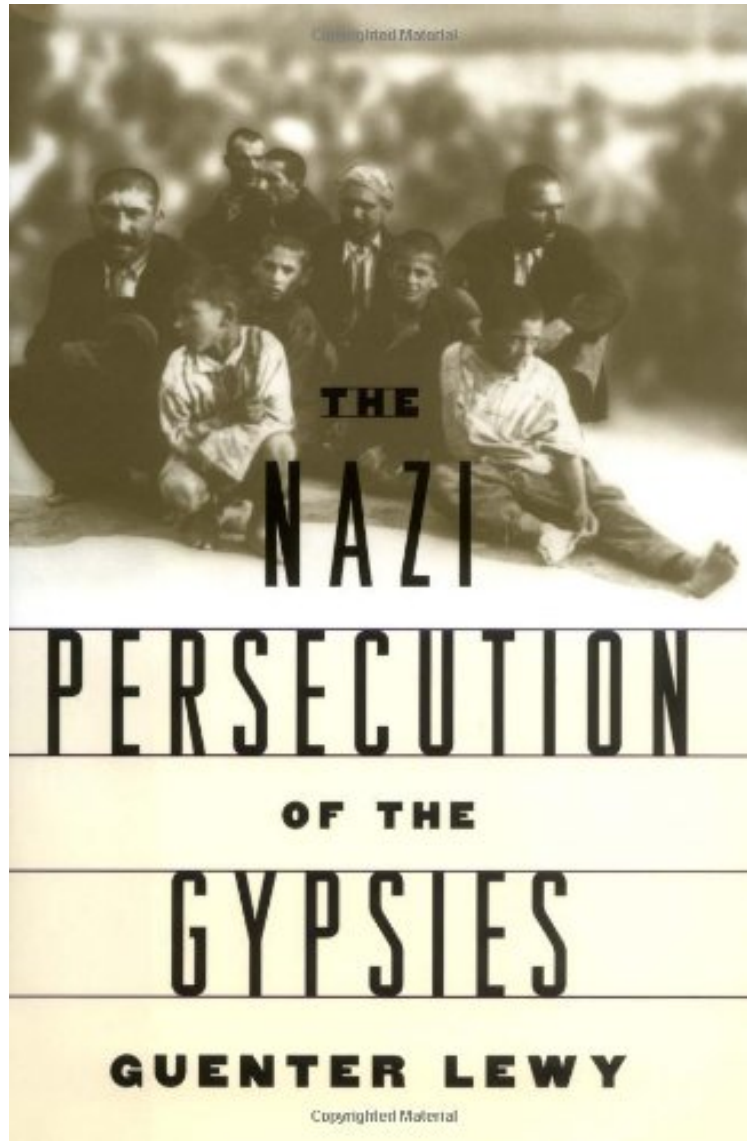


(Get free) The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies

## The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies

*Guenter Lewy*

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**Guenter Lewy : The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. SterlingBy HHLewy's study is a valuable piece of research that presents a detailed account of the Nazis' bureaucratic and social policies towards the Gypsies, and a window into the lives of several Gypsies before, during, and after the Second World War. While focusing primarily on the Gypsies from Germany and Austria, Lewy examines a multitude of archival and documentary materials that show how

extensive, and in some cases how varied, the Nazi position was on the Gypsy problem. The origins of the oppression and maltreatment of Gypsies date back to the early 15th century when they first appeared in central Europe. The Gypsies were always seen as outsiders by the governing bodies of Europe, and with the establishment in 1899 of the Central Office for Gypsy Affairs in Bavaria the German government began a systematic cataloging of the Gypsy population that culminated in 1925 with "more than 14,000 names from all over Germany" (p. 9). Lewy emphasizes throughout the book that the desire of the German government to track the Gypsies was, initially, a means of identifying so-called "work-shy" individuals, or people who were seen as vagabonds or petty criminals. Unlike the Jews, who were seen by the Nazis as an economic and political threat, the Gypsy problem was of a biological and social nature: Gypsies were viewed as a group of people whose blood was of an inferior quality and whose work habits were a detriment to a country in economic turmoil. The examination of the biological schema of Gypsies is one in which the Nazi government took a particular interest. The issues of eugenics and racial hygiene were key criteria by which Gypsies were identified and categorized, and Lewy provides a detailed examination into the work of Robert Ritter, the head of Germany's Rassenhygienische und bevölkerungsbiologische Forschungsstelle (The Research Institute for Racial Hygiene and Population Biology). Since the degree of one's racial purity was in many cases a matter of incarceration or extermination, Ritter and his colleagues devised a system that identified a person as one of five possible degrees of race status. The narrowing of race should have simplified the Nazi questions of what to do with the Gypsies, but Lewy's research has shown that it only led to confusion and contradiction in the German high ranks. Himmler was fascinated with "racially pure" Gypsies, for he viewed them as direct descendants of the Aryan race who, like the Gypsies, originated in the Indian subcontinent, and he desired to "keep alive just a few of these pure Gypsies as a kind of live museum or as 'rare animals'" (p. 148). Hitler was opposed to this idea, and as Lewy discovered in a multitude of diaries and notes from high and low-level meetings, there was much debate as to the fate of the Gypsies in the Nazi bureaucracy: no one could come to an agreement as to whether they were to be isolated in concentration camps, sterilized, sent to the periphery of the empire, placed in forced labor camps, or systematically exterminated. From viewing Lewy's copious amounts of mandates and laws, on the local, state, and national level, the Nazi party from 1933 to March 1943 had no unified law regarding the Gypsies. From March 1943 on, the solution was to send all Gypsies of all racial backgrounds from Austria and Germany to Auschwitz or one of the other larger camps, such as Ravensbrück or Dachau. How one should write a history, and in particular a history that has the Holocaust as its focal point, has become an issue of great debate among historians, philosophers, and theorists. What stands out in Lewy's study are the facts: the specific number of Gypsies Mengele experimented upon, racial assessment documents of a Hungarian and Austrian Gypsy, the records of Gypsies in the concentration camps, and the countless individual details of specific Gypsies and their fates, fates that many times throughout the period of persecution, Lewy reminds us, remain unrecorded. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Sad and not readily known By Paul L. Davis This is a great examination of a little known and even lesser understood aspect of the Holocaust. The Roma and Sinti (Gypsy sub-groups) were some of the first to be persecuted. Most of the crime in a city would be laid at the hands of the Gypsies when they were near. They were singled out even before the Jews. They were shunned by society simply because they had no fixed home and lived a nomadic lifestyle. There were even laws that stipulated that church bells must be rung when the Gypsies entered a town to warn the locals to lock up their valuables. This book is a must read if you want to understand what really happened in the Holocaust, not just have a general overview of its history. This is not an easy book to read. It is in-depth and delves into a very difficult subject that is heart wrenching at best and quite depressing at worst. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Book By Zulfikar Yousafzai Reese As a Romani person I am very happy to be able to get hold of a book about the Porrajmos. It is a good book and very informative. However, the author tries to make the claim that the slaughter of our people was no genocide, which is absolutely false!

Roaming the countryside in caravans, earning their living as musicians, peddlers, and fortune-tellers, the Gypsies and their elusive way of life represented an affront to Nazi ideas of social order, hard work, and racial purity. They were branded as "asocials," harassed, and eventually herded into concentration camps where many thousands were killed. But until now the story of their persecution has either been overlooked or distorted. In *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies*, Guenter Lewy draws upon thousands of documents--many never before used--from German and Austrian archives to provide the most comprehensive and accurate study available of the fate of the Gypsies under the Nazi regime. Lewy traces the escalating vilification of the Gypsies as the Nazis instigated a widespread crackdown on the "work-shy" and "itinerants." But he shows that Nazi policy towards Gypsies was confused and changeable. At first, local officials persecuted gypsies, and those who behaved in gypsy-like fashion, for allegedly anti-social tendencies. Later, with the rise of race obsession, Gypsies were seen as a threat to German racial purity, though Himmler himself wavered, trying to save those he considered "pure Gypsies" descended from Aryan roots in India. Indeed, Lewy contradicts much existing scholarship in showing that, however much the Gypsies were persecuted, there was no general program of extermination analogous to the "final solution" for the Jews. Exploring in heart-rending detail the fates of individual Gypsies and their families, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* makes an important addition to our

understanding both of the history of this mysterious people and of all facets of the Nazi terror.

From Publishers Weekly  
The Nationalist Socialist dream of a pure society demanded elimination not only of the Jews but of all those who challenged the homogeneity of a racial and cultural utopia. Europe's Gypsies presented a particular problem for the race-obsessed Nazis: on the one hand they were viewed as antisocial liars and thieves, as "work-shy" and as wanderers without a homeland. Yet they supposedly descended from "Aryan" roots in India. Hence Lewy finds policies concerning them to be often contradictory and fluctuating. A professor emeritus of political science at UMass (Amherst), Lewy has plumbed the archives and, through meticulous documentation and a painstaking reconstruction of events, arrived at a startling new interpretation of the Nazi policy toward the Gypsies. Lewy argues that in contrast to the Final Solution of the "Jewish Question," the Nazis had no comparable plan to exterminate the Gypsies. And when the latter were sent to the concentration camps for extermination, it was not solely because of their biological existence, like the Jews, but because their wandering way of life challenged the social and cultural construct of the Third Reich. An important facet in the Gypsies' fate, according to Lewy, was ordinary Germans' insistence on measures against them, something the Nazi regime did not have to foster. Lewy shows how Nazi persecution of the Gypsies evolved through the 1930s: at first, local officials were responsible for measures of control and harassment; eventually, the racial laws written against Jews were directed against Gypsies. Lewy traces this sequence of events in detail; his theory may be controversial, but he argues his case carefully. 20 bw photos. (Feb.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
This book by Lewy (emeritus, political science, Univ. of Massachusetts) addresses an important need in the historiography of the Nazi era. His systematic study of the persecution of the Gypsies places their story in the context of German racial law. Since many Gypsies lived an indigent life and were often shunned as thieves, they were initially classified as "work shy" by the Nazis. As Nazi racial laws further defined "racial pollution," the Gypsies found themselves stigmatized as a foreign element potentially dangerous to the Aryan racial utopia. Of particular interest is Lewy's analysis of how some Gypsies managed to survive by being classified as "socially adjusted," meaning they had jobs and permanent residence, and therefore could avoid deportation (although not sterilization). Based on solid archival sources, this should become the standard work on the subject. Recommended for most public and academic libraries. -Frederic Krome, Jacob Rader Marcus Ctr. of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Kirkus  
A distinguished historian explores the fate of the Gypsies during the Third Reich. The Gypsies had been a reviled and often persecuted minority for many centuries, wandering from place to place, often accused of witchcraft and theft, but they were initially of not much interest to the Nazis. When Hitler became chancellor in 1933, they numbered no more than 26,000. Yet by the end of the war, according to varying (and, Lewy notes, not verifiable) estimates, the total number of Gypsy victims in Nazi-occupied Europe may have been as high as 219,000. Lewy (Political Science/UMass Amherst; Peace and Revolution, 1988, etc.) here strives to make sense of the confusion of Nazi policy towards the group. Much of its impetus, he suggests, came not so much from the Nazis themselves as from local officials who saw Gypsies as shiftless, thieving, anti-social, and hard to control. Their often dark complexion raised the further complaint that they were an alien, non-Aryan influence. In 1938, for the first time, the Nazis began to treat the Gypsy problem as a racial problem. Thousands in Germany and Austria were sent to the concentration camps, and on the outbreak of war their situation deteriorated further, ranging from expulsion from the schools to compulsory work, regulation of marriage and sexual relations, involuntary sterilization, removal from the Reich, and incarceration in concentration camps. Their plight was somewhat abated by Himmler's uncertainty as to whether the lighter Gypsies might not be of genuinely Aryan origin, but not much attention was paid to these reservations in the brutal atmosphere of the time. Still, Lewy argues that, despite their fearful fate, including forced sterilization that conforms to the definition of genocide, "there existed no overall plan for the extermination of the Gypsy people, and . . . none was ever implemented. A moving account of the fate of a small people caught in a maelstrom. (20 halftones) -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.