

# NEVER AGAIN!

27<sup>th</sup> January:  
Celebrating International  
Holocaust Remembrance Day



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**EROM**

**IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION**

Never Again!

“*Sooner or later in life everyone discovers that perfect happiness is unrealizable, but there are few who pause to consider the antithesis: that perfect unhappiness is equally unattainable. The obstacles preventing the realization of both these extreme states are of the same nature: they derive from our human condition which is opposed to everything infinite.*”

**Primo Levi, Survival in Auschwitz**

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Day

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# INTRODUCTION

Far too often, the Holocaust during WWII is associated merely with the Jewish persecution. However, there is another genocide that is frequently forgotten; a genocide where hundreds of thousands of Roma also fell victim and were too persecuted by the Nazi regime.



After centuries of persecution, Europe's Roma were also faced with the threat of extermination under the Nazi regime, because they were counter to 'the norm' as defined by the Nazis. Throughout the Third Reich, Roma as well as other minority groups were subjected to persecution and genocide. During this time, anti-ziganist legislation was passed in Germany degrading Roma to second-class citizens and depriving them of their civil rights. German authorities subjected Roma to arbitrary internment, forced labour and mass murder as they were officially recognised as 'non-Aryan' and 'racially

inferior'. The SS and police incarcerated Roma in various concentration camps such as Auschwitz-Birkenau, Dachau, Dieselstrasse, Sachsenhausen and elsewhere with the objective of eliminating all Roma in Europe. It is estimated that between 220,000 - 1.5 million Roma were murdered (70-80% of the Roma population in Germany, and approximately 25% of all of Europe's Roma).

Even after the Holocaust and despite their long-term presence in Europe, Roma remain the largest minority to suffer such large scale discrimination and persecution on the continent. Living primarily on the margins of society, they face segregation and many obstacles in that their everyday lives particularly in regards to education, employment, housing and healthcare.



## IDEOLOGICAL BASIS

Against the background of scientific biology, which considered hereditary factors as fundamental to human existence, the ideas of superior and inferior, “pure” and “mixed races”, “worthy” and “unworthy life” found their way into criminology. In 1876, the Italian Cesare Lombroso, for the first time made “genetic predisposition” responsible for the “Gypsies’” alleged criminal acts in his “*l'uomo delinquente*” (the criminal man).

The idea that races could be made “superior” by controlling procreation, an idea which was widely believed in Europe and the United States, was coupled with the call for “eradicating” “unhereditary (*erbuntüchtige*) people” in Germany after World War I. The racial hygienist demands ranged from internment, to abortion and sterilisation, to euthanasia. In 1920, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche demanded that all those who lead a “ballast existence” and who were a “burden to society” be killed. In 1923, the first chair of Racial Hygiene was filled in Munich; its holder, Fritz Lenz, wrote a text on “*menschliche Auslese und Rassenhygiene*” (human selection and racial hygiene), which later had some influence on Hitler’s “*mein Kampf*”. Organisations, groups of scientists and influential private individuals fought to spread

the ideas of racial hygiene, which fell on fertile ground in the Germany of the interwar years. Political parties, particularly the Nazis, used these ideas to fan the flames of the increasing resentment towards the Jews and other population groups. On July 14, 1933, the racial theory was finally adopted by the laws of the Third Reich. The notion of “unworthy life” had a significant influence in the Nazi race policy. On the one hand, “hereditary (*erbgesund*)” and “Aryan” offspring was supported, and on the other hand mentally and physically challenged people as well as “asocials” and “foreign races” were persecuted. The “Gypsies”, whose place in the system was not easy to determine because of their Aryan descent, were generally considered “asocial” and were consequently seen as an “asocial race”, in the absence of a better criterion.

## CRIMINAL POLICE AND “ETHNOGENETIC REGISTRATION” OF “GYPSIES”

As far as the roma were concerned, the nazis could not only use the negative prejudices that were deeply rooted in the population, but also the decades of police experience concerning the “Gypsy plague”. Both in Germany and austria the centralisation of the traditional police “Gypsy battle” started in the 1920s. at first, the authorities’ registration of the roma aimed at “preventively fighting crimes”.



In 1936, the “Zentralstelle zur Bekämpfung des Zigeunerunwesens” (central Bureau for fighting the “Gypsy” Plague) was set up in Vienna. in Germany, the “reichsführer ss” – heinrich himmler – ’s nomination to the head of the police force within the ministry of interior paved the way for “standardised” action. the “Gypsies” were at first, against a background of wide-spread anti-“Gypsyism”, seen primarily as a police problem, but due to the constantly rising influence of racial theory, the racist aspect in ideologically assessing the “Gypsies” became more and more important. the “nürnberger rassen-

gesetze” (race laws) of 1935 led the way by classifying the “Gypsies” as “racially inferior” and by taking away their nationality and thus their citizens’ rights. it was the role of scientists to prove afterwards that these dogmas were right. the ns regime thus found another “enemy” whose slandering and approaching extinction could unify the “German people”. When robert ritter, doctor and psychiatrist, took over the leading position in the “rassenhygienische und erbbiologische forschungsstelle” (research centre for racial hygiene) of the reich’s department of Public health, he became a central figure in “Gypsy research” in the reich. his real goal was proving that criminal and “asocial” behaviour was hereditary. Whereas the jews had been accused of intellectually “dissolving” the structure of the state, the “Gypsies” were declared “primitives”, “poor in culture” and lacking history, who threatened the moral order by “mixing” and “building a criminal sub-proletariat” because of their race. already by 1935, the demand was made that “Gypsies” should be interned in labour camps and sterilised by force. ritter’s main focus were the “Gypsy half-breeds”, the classification being even wider than with the jews: people were de-

clared a “Gypsy half-breed” when one of their eight great-grandparents was a “Gypsy”. late in 1938, heinrich himmler announced in a circular that he would “solve the Gypsy question through the nature of that race”. the theories of nazi scientists and politicians remained, however, contradictory until 1942/43. on the one hand, the roma’s indian descent classified them as “aryans”, but on the other hand politicians and scientists wanted to prove their “foreign race” (artfremdheit) in order to legitimise their persecution. Because of the ideological contradictions, the persecution of “Gypsies” was carried out in a far less coordinated way than that of the jewish population. for instance, several roma were still in the army in 1943, even though that very army was involved in the roma genocide in the east, and even though thousands had already been killed in concentration camps. these members of the army were deported directly from the front to auschwitz, sometimes even with medals of honour.

## THE FIRST DEPORTATIONS AND INTERNMENT IN COLLECTING CAMPS

After the roma had been deprived of all their rights and possibilities of income, they often had to rely on the charity of local authorities, for which they were a considerable strain. this

strain, caused by the nazis, was used as a pretext to initiate measures of persecution against the roma. the racial hygienist’s main concern were the so-called “Gypsy halfbreeds”. in the course of the campaign “arbeitsscheu reich” (Workshy reich), which was directed against beggars, prostitutes, vagrants and “Gypsies”, the first arrests took place. on the orders of the Reichskriminalpolizeiamt (Reich Office of the criminal Police), 700 German roma, most of them sinti, were deported to the concentration camps dachau, Buchenwald, sachsenhausen and lichtenburg in june 1938. one year later, 3,000 German and austrian roma were deported to the concentration camps dachau, mauthausen, ravensbrück and Buchenwald. The ns authorities and the police could rely on the police investigations of the interwar years as far as the roma’s registration was concerned. Because of the “festsetzungserlass” (freezing-of-movement directive) by himmler and heydrich (1939), the roma were not allowed to leave the towns where they lived. if they did not respect this decree, they were immediately admitted to a concentration camp. under himmler’s orders (“schnellbrief”), there was a wave of interments in collecting camps in 1939. the real goal of that decree was to concen-

trate all “Gypsies” in the German reich – their number being estimated at 30,000 – in camps and to deport them as quickly as possible to the “Generalgouvernement” in Poland. the decree could not be translated into action quickly, which is why the provisional “collecting camps” were turned into “labour camps” similar to concentration camps

## LABOUR CAMPS

Numerous labour camps were erected in Germany, post-an-schluss austria and in the German-occupied territories of central and eastern europe. initially, most of these camps were designed as punitive labour camps for working roma men only, like the many camps in austria and in Germany. in austria, for instance, there were at least 17 camps of different size. some of these “labour camps“, like the lety camp in southern Bohemia, or the one in the Belzec complex in Poland, were turned into “Gypsy camps“ for roma men, women and children. many camps were closed in 1943; the inmates were either de ported to the death camps, to oth-er labour camps or were killed on the spot. some camps existed until 1944, for example dubnica nad Vahom in Western slovakia. the biggest of the “Gypsy“ camps, lackenbach in Bur-genland, which had up to 2,300 in

mates in 1941, existed until the end of the war. the internees had to per-form hard physical labour: they had to dig feeders, river regulations, or reservoirs, do roadworks, per-form field work, and work in com-panies of all kinds. mortality was high, due to malnutrition, hard work, and diseases. in lackenbach, 237 people died during the five years of the camp’s existence, in lety, at least 326 people died in three years; in Belzec, although there are no exact numbers, the toll is be-lieved to have been similarly high.

## MASS EXECUTIONS

The systematic murder of roma start-ed in the summer of 1941, caused by the German assault on the ussr. as “accomplices” and “spies” of “jewish Bolshevism” thousands of roma fell victim to mass executions by the ss “einsatzgruppen” (task forces) who, assisted by the army, murdered them behind the front. contrary to the ac-tions taken in Germany, the police’s main concern in most areas were the travelling, “racially pure” and “en-dogamous Gypsies” who, as a mobile population, corresponded best to the image of spies. 33,000 jews, and hundreds of roma were among the victims of the mass murder in Babi jar near Kiev, which was commit-ted by the “einsatzgruppe c” togeth-er with the “6. armee”. as in the so-

viet union, more roma were killed through mass executions than in the camps in Poland and other territories of eastern europe and the Balkans occupied by the nazis. there are no precise numbers available, but conservative estimates talk about far more than 100,000 people who were murdered outside of the camp system. [ill. 8] in serbia, occupied by the Germans since 1941, the so-called "revenge executions", to which jews, serbs and roma fell victim, were of equal importance in the extinction of the roma minority. contrary to the east, the "einsatztruppen" chose the victims, and the army carried out the executions. harald turner, head of the German military administration, declared in 1942 that serbia was the only country in which the "jewish and Gypsy question" had been "solved". the "einsatzgruppen" and the armed forces were supported by local fascist organizations. in croatia the "ustascha"-militia, and in hungary, under German rule from 1944 onwards, the "arrow cross"-fascists carried out the mass executions, organised the deportations and run the camps.

## THE GHETTO LODZ

As has already mentioned above, roma should originally have been interned in the "Generalgouvernement Polen" in "collecting camps" only to wait for "their final deportation" (himmler's "schnellbrief" of 1938). in the jewish ghetto of lodz ("litzmannstadt") a "Gypsy camp" was erected in 1941 under himmler's orders. the ss, the "jüdische ordnungsdienst" (jewish security force) and a "Gypsy police" set up especially for that task were to block off the quarter from the rest of the ghetto and the outside world. no information about the camps' condition should reach the outside. Between the 5th and 9th november, 1941, 5 transportations with a total of 5,007 roma from austria arrived in the lodz ghetto. members of the ss and the "reichsarbeitsdienstes" (reich work force) guarded the camp and made some of the internees carry out forced labour. the roma had to sleep on the floor and got neither medication nor enough food. after a short time typhus fever broke out. those 4,400 people who were still alive in january 1942 were brought in trucks to the extermination camp chelmno/Kulmhof and murdered in gas wagons. none of the original 5,007 austrian roma survived.



## THE "AUSCHWITZ-ERLASS" (AUSCHWITZ DECREE)

On December 16, 1942, Heinrich Himmler gave out the directive that all "Gypsies" still living in the "German Reich" were to be deported to Auschwitz. The "Auschwitz Decree" was the final revelation of a plan which had existed de facto since 1938 and had been partially carried out already, namely the complete extinction of "Gypsies". Himmler's deportation order was directed against all "Gypsy half-breeds, Rom-Gypsies and Balkan Gypsies", the "degree of half-breeding" being no longer of importance. The exception of a small group of "racially pure Gypsies", who were to be used as "museum exhibits" in Himmler's open air museum, existed only on paper. In the so-called "Gypsy family camp" at Auschwitz, more than 20,000 Roma, who had, in the vast majority come from "collecting camps" in Germany, Austria, Poland, Bohemia and Moravia, were perched together in the smallest of places. 32 wooden barracks, each of which should originally have been used for 52 horses, were used as accommodation. Up to 600 Roma were put in one such barrack. Accordingly the sanitary circumstances were disastrous. Already after a few months hundreds of Roma had died from malnutrition, epidemics and forced labour. Roma were used for the most difficult

clay- and building work within the camp. The hunger epidemic "noma" raged among the children. Additionally, the camp system was marked by internal power structures. Political internees were at the upper end, Jews and Roma at the lower end of the hierarchy. Stereotypes and prejudices were taken over by the camp community. The identifications set down by the SS made quick recognition possible. Roma wore a brown or black triangle, the inmate number preceded by a "Z" (for "Zigeuner") was tattooed to the forearm.



**Deportation of Serbs and Roma (Gypsies) to Krasno and Jasenovac**  
The photograph shows the deportation of Serbs and Roma (Gypsies) to Krasno and Jasenovac. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, being transported in a train or bus. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is blurred, suggesting a long journey.



**Gypsy Camp in the forest ghetto**  
The photograph shows a Gypsy camp in the forest ghetto. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, standing in a line. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is a dense forest.



**Gypsy camp in the forest ghetto**



**Gypsy camp in the forest ghetto**



**Romani (Gypsy) prisoners in Dachau**  
The photograph shows Romani (Gypsy) prisoners in Dachau. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, standing in a line. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is a simple, outdoor setting.



**Forced labor camp for Roma**  
The photograph shows a forced labor camp for Roma. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, working in a field. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is a simple, outdoor setting.



**Camp at the Jasenovac ghetto**



**Camp at the Jasenovac ghetto**



**Aftermath of pogrom in Istria**  
The photograph shows the aftermath of a pogrom in Istria. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, standing in a line. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is a simple, outdoor setting.



**Forced labor in the Samobor camp**  
The photograph shows forced labor in the Samobor camp. The image is a black and white photograph showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, working in a field. They are wearing simple, dark clothing and appear to be in a state of distress. The background is a simple, outdoor setting.



**Camp at the Jasenovac ghetto**



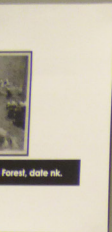
**Camp at the Jasenovac ghetto**



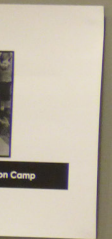
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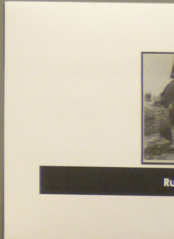
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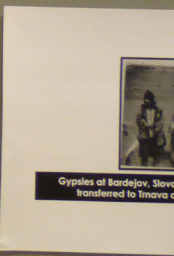
on Camp



Polish/Eu



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